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The Implementation of  
Illinois' Pre-Start Program:  
An Initial Evaluation

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# The Implementation of Illinois' PreStart Program: An Initial Assessment

The Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency and Corrections  
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

December 1993

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . . . .	1
CHAPTER ONE: An Overview Of Pre-Start And Current Evaluative Efforts . . . . .	7
Evaluation Plan . . . . .	9
Organization of this Report . . . . .	10
CHAPTER TWO: The Genesis of PreStart . . . . .	12
National Trends Relating to Parole . . . . .	13
Organizational Structuring . . . . .	13
Philosophical Shifts/Questions of Effectiveness . . . . .	14
Parole Supervision Effectiveness . . . . .	14
Trends in Correctional Populations and Budgets . . . . .	15
The Results for Parole Supervision . . . . .	16
The Context of Reform in Illinois . . . . .	18
Methodology . . . . .	18
The Policy Context . . . . .	20
Sentencing and Criminal Code Reform . . . . .	20
Correctional Populations and Expenditures . . . . .	21
Philosophical Shifts Regarding Parole Supervision . . . . .	23
Time-Line of PreStart Development . . . . .	27
What Did the Newspapers Say? . . . . .	27
What Did IDOC Public Documents Say? . . . . .	28
What Did Key Decision Makers Say? . . . . .	30
Where Did the Idea Begin? . . . . .	30
From Idea to Program . . . . .	31
Summary of Policy Origin . . . . .	34
Implications for Implementation . . . . .	35
CHAPTER THREE: System-wide Issues in PreStart's Implementation and a Review of Phase I Programming: Uneven Success in a Difficult Context . . . . .	37
Methodology and Data Collection . . . . .	37
Staff Questionnaires . . . . .	39
Institutional Visits . . . . .	41

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

System-wide Implementation Issues and Findings . . . . .	42
The Social, Political, and Economic Environment . . . . .	42
Internal Conditions . . . . .	44
Characteristics of the Implementing Agency . . . . .	44
Standards . . . . .	45
Policy, Procedure, and Directives . . . . .	46
Curriculum Development . . . . .	47
Resources . . . . .	48
Staff . . . . .	49
Training . . . . .	52
Materials and Physical Plants . . . . .	53
Communication and Staff Involvement in Planning . . . . .	54
Disposition of Implementors . . . . .	58
Staff Role Perceptions . . . . .	58
Perceptions of Job Security . . . . .	60
Key Factors Affecting Implementation Success in Phase I . . . . .	
Programming . . . . .	62
Administrative Leadership . . . . .	63
Staff Commitment . . . . .	64
Back-up Facilitators/Staff Rotation . . . . .	65
Communication Patterns . . . . .	65
Individual Development Plans(IDP's) . . . . .	66
Implementation at Community Correctional Centers . . . . .	70
Staff Dispositions: Programming Redundancy? . . . . .	70
Program Structures . . . . .	72
External/Internal Resource Utilization . . . . .	72
Electronic Detention (ED) . . . . .	73
Community Correctional Center Summary . . . . .	74
Chapter Summary and Conclusions . . . . .	75
CHAPTER FOUR: Inmate Reactions to PreStart . . . . .	78
Methodology . . . . .	78
The Sample . . . . .	81
Inmate Perceptions of PreStart . . . . .	84
Baseline Assessments . . . . .	84
Perceptions of Instructional Quality . . . . .	86
Perceptions Regarding Finding Preparations for Release . . . . .	88
Perceptions Regarding Finding Help on the Outside . . . . .	90

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

Perceived Value of the Individual Development Plan . . . . .	92
Perceptions of Administrative Reactions to PreStart . . . . .	94
Ideas for Improvement: Inmates' Own Words . . . . .	96
Chapter Summary and Conclusions . . . . .	98
CHAPTER FIVE: Implementation of Phase II Programming . . . . .	100
Community Service Centers . . . . .	101
Special Programs for Special Populations . . . . .	103
Sex Offender Population . . . . .	103
Community Drug Units . . . . .	104
Special Intensive Supervision Unit (SISU) . . . . .	105
Summary . . . . .	107
CHAPTER SIX: Allied Agencies . . . . .	108
Background and Rationale . . . . .	108
Survey Methods and Procedures . . . . .	108
Allied Agency Survey Goals . . . . .	111
Survey Results . . . . .	112
Awareness of PreStart . . . . .	112
Receptiveness . . . . .	113
Perceptions and Expectations . . . . .	116
Criminal Justice Agencies . . . . .	116
Social Service Agencies . . . . .	118
Obstacles . . . . .	120
Gaps in Services . . . . .	121
Summary and Conclusions . . . . .	122
CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusions and Recommendations . . . . .	125
REFERENCES . . . . .	130



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## TABLES

TABLE NUMBERS		PAGE NUMBERS
2.1	Parole Populations and Rates . . . . .	16
3.1	Staff Employment Characteristics . . . . .	40
3.2	Non-Administrative/Administrative Staff Perceptions of Involvement in PreStart Planning . . . . .	57
4.1	Inmate Response Patterns By Facility . . . . .	80
4.2	Characteristics of the Inmate Sample . . . . .	82
4.2A	Percent Distribution of Inmate Perceived Problems, and Descriptive Statistics . . . . .	83
4.3	Perceptions of the Effect of Prison vs. PreStart in Our Life (by facility) . .	85
4.4	Perceptions of the Value of PreStart Compared to Earlier Pre-Release Programming Offered by IDOC Among People Serving at Least a Second Prison Term (by facility) . . . . .	87
4.5	Percent Distribution of Response to the Question: "How Would you Rate the Overall Quality of Instruction you Received in PreStart?" (by facility) . . . . .	88
4.6	Percent Distribution of Response to the Statement: " PreStart Offers Nothing to Help Me for Release" (by facility) . . . . .	89
4.7	Percent Distribution of Response to the Statement: "PreStart Taught Me Me How To Find Help on the Outside" (by facility) . . . . .	91
4.8	Percent Distribution of Response to the Statement: "Because of PreStart I will Utilize Services From Community Service Centers When I Need Them" (by facility) . . . . .	92
4.9	Percent Distribution of Response to the Statement: "Developing an Individual Development Plan Has Been a Very Useful Experience" (by facility) . . . . .	94
4.10	Percent Distribution of Response to the Statement: "The Administration at This Facility Gives PreStart Good Lip-Service But Little Else" (by facility) . . . . .	96

6.1	Sample Counties for Allied Agency Survey . . . . .	110
6.2	Comparison of PreStart with Previous Parole Services . . . . .	115

## FIGURES

FIGURE NUMBERS		PAGE NUMBERS
3.1	Staff Responses To The Question: Are There Sufficient Staff To Implement PreStart? . . . . .	50
3.2	Rationale Given To Staff System-Wide Responses (CSC Staff) . . . . .	56
3.3	Staff Perceptions of Their Role . . . . .	59
3.4	Staff Perceptions of Job Satisfaction Before and After PreStart . . . . .	61
3.5	Staff Perceptions That IDP's Are Useful . . . . .	68
3.6	Staff Perceptions That IDP's Are Not Tailored to Specific Inmates . . . . .	69



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This work is dedicated to the many individuals working within the PreStart program whose commitment and energy has made the most of a very difficult situation. Especially noteworthy have been the efforts of Barry Bass, an individual whose humanity and caring spirit is reflected in the best that PreStart has to offer.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The PreStart Evaluation Project being conducted by a number of faculty and students of the Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency, and Corrections at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale is in the process of examining the implementation and impact of the PreStart program. Representing a significant departure from traditional pre-release and post-release offender structures and programming, the program was implemented in the summer of 1991 by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). With the introduction of the PreStart program, Illinois introduced a bifurcated system into its mandatory supervised release program for persons recently released from prison. Radically different from most parole supervision structures, PreStart separates the surveillance and supervision functions of parole from integrative social service provision functions. After mandated specialized institutional preparation for release (termed Phase I programming), the vast majority of releasees are allowed to voluntarily utilize community resources brokered through a system of newly developed Community Service Centers. The Service Centers are designed to be information and resource brokerage facilities, intended to promote the abilities of releasees to develop and implement effective employment, residential living, and treatment plans.

For releasees who present specific needs, Illinois has planned the implementation of specialized service delivery mechanisms: (a) four Community Drug Intervention Programs, which will provide services and drug testing for releasees posing manifest substance abuse needs; (b) contracted services for specialized interventions with selected sex offenders will be available under the PreStart program; and (c) development of a Special Intensive Supervision Unit to which certain releasees who are thought to pose enhanced risks to public safety, and those released from the Dixon Springs Shock Incarceration program, will be assigned. The Intensive Supervision Unit is the only component of the PreStart program that retains the traditional surveillance function of parole supervision. The total package of services and programs available for releasees in the community is termed Phase II programming.

This brief description of the PreStart program clearly suggests that what the State of Illinois is attempting to do with inmates recently released from prison represents a significant departure from traditional parole supervision models. This change effort involves a

significant transformation in the philosophy, structure, and practice by which inmates in the State of Illinois are conditionally allowed to reenter the community.

This interim report focuses on issues of policy development and Phase I program implementation. The policy context in which the program was conceived and the process by which it was formulated and developed is examined in the initial section of the report. A variety of data sources were utilized to discover that PreStart was developed in a turbulent policy environment, that the reform was the result of long-standing disenchantment with existing parole structures, and that a severe budget crisis was the precipitating factor which determined the timing of PreStart's birth. Pragmatic financial and organizational concerns drove much of the process which resulted in the PreStart program but the program does also reflect changing correctional philosophies within IDOC.

The timing of the restructuring of parole in terms of planning, staff morale, and available resources was unfortunate. The dash for funding necessitated an abrupt and abbreviated planning process. Staff morale sunk to an all time low. Even with the external funding available to subsidize Phase II programming, remaining IDOC budgetary constraints would limit the amount of staff and equipment accessible to implement PreStart smoothly and to facilitate the inherent link desired between Phase I and Phase II. Programs that were not yet clearly defined--i.e., lacking solid program parameters--had to be implemented on a time line corresponding with the start of a new fiscal year. Thus, the bulk of the program formulation process lasted only a few months.

The hasty process of program development made it difficult to identify and accommodate implementation contingencies that were likely to develop. Understandably, this meant that the program was formulated without having widespread legitimacy among groups that could shape its eventual implementation. Coupled with an unstable policy environment, many barriers to successful program implementation were bred in the formulation process.

✧ The present study also provides an overview of the organizational environment in which the program was implemented, highlighting the less than ideal context in which it was translated into action. A number of factors influential in shaping program outcomes, and often responsible for the level of implementation success, are discussed. Assessments are based on site visit observations, interviews with PreStart staff and inmates, and an analysis of



questionnaires from PreStart Phase I and Phase II staff.

The study then looks at the implementation of Phase I programming and examines how a variety of system-wide and facility-based factors promoted an uneven level of implementation across facilities. In particular, the introduction of an inadequate program model and curriculum under fairly rigid implementation conditions established by Central Office aggravated existing morale and staffing patterns. Not feeling an "ownership" of the change, many staff are still hostile towards the PreStart program and how it was implemented.

The implementation process was plagued by inadequate resources in the form of staff, instructional materials, and physical space to deliver the program. Communication patterns were also quite weak within many facilities and between Central Office and facility staff. Many staff did not understand the goals of PreStart and the *necessity of its implementation*. Orientation and meaningful staff training/development programs were lacking during the early stages of implementation.

Despite the many significant barriers to successful implementation, evaluation staff witnessed the existence of many bona fide PHASE I programs. The key factors resulting in these outcomes were the acknowledged priority given PreStart by the Director and his immediate staff, the vigilance of certain Community Services Division staff to "keep things afloat," and strong administrative support for PreStart by high level facility administrators. Visible, active, and forceful support of PreStart was demonstrated in a variety of ways -- e.g., in the form of attending classes and graduation ceremonies, assigning committed and competent staff to key PreStart functions, lubricating relationships across organizational subunits, etc., -- and appeared to be the key factor distinguishing successful programs from unsuccessful programs. Notably, the degree of implementation success did not appear overly constrained by facility security level, inmate population composition, or resource levels. Only in one facility were resource levels so low that the integrity of the PreStart program was jeopardized. Committed staff, who are more likely to remain vitalized if supported by team teaching and staff rotation patterns, were found at all site visits, but at some facilities the staff as well as the inmates were disaffected and demoralized. This tended to reflect general organizational cultures more so than anything specific about PreStart.

The process by which inmates developed Individual Development Plans (IDPs) with the help of PreStart staff was also examined. IDPs were designed to serve as the link between Phase I and Phase II programming, and to guide both inmates and PreStart Phase II staff in the delivery and acquisition of needed community services. In general, and across all facilities, despite the centrality of the IDP to effective PreStart programming, IDPs play a limited role in Phase I efforts. They are not taken seriously by most staff and inmates, and are not tailored to reflect the unique needs of particular individuals.

Implementation of PreStart at Community Correctional Centers (CCCs) was generally much weaker than at correctional institutions. This tended to reflect the greater flexibility allowed CCCs by Central Office in the offering of PreStart than was allowed the institutions, as well as the common view of CCC staff that PreStart is redundant to extant pre-release programming. This was not found to be true, however; the CCCs with the weakest PreStart programs also exerted questionable levels of effort to promote the reintegration of their residents. In particular, problems presented by Electronic Detention clients were noted.

Reactions of the PreStart's primary targets of change, inmates, to Phase I PreStart programming were the subject of a separate analysis and generated some very interesting findings. In general, it was found that the Illinois Department of Corrections has put together a pre-release program that has been very well received by the vast majority of its consumers. The program is generally perceived by inmates to provide them with practical and meaningful skills, attitudes, and information that will help them make a smoother transition to the community. Over 70 percent of inmate respondents reported the overall quality of PreStart instruction as good or outstanding and over 65 percent of the inmates reported that PreStart has helped them in a variety of ways. Inmate reactions to PreStart, however, varied somewhat across facilities, with certain facilities consistently ranking quite low on a variety of indicators of program success.

A descriptive overview of program components associated with Phase II efforts was also presented. A preliminary implementation analysis with focus on particular issues presented by Community Service Center operations, Community Drug Intervention Units, and the Special Intensive Supervision Unit will be presented in a forthcoming report.

Finally, the responses of representatives from a Statewide sampling of criminal justice

and social service agencies to the PreStart program were examined. Unfortunately, the response rate to the mailed survey was poor, since only about one-third of the surveys were returned. This factor, coupled with the finding that most of those who did respond were unaware of PreStart until they received the survey instrument, limits the value of this component of the study. Nevertheless, some tentative findings emerged. Even though many of the survey respondents had limited information about PreStart (that gleaned from the questionnaire itself), most seemed generally supportive of the notion that PreStart is a good idea.

Primarily for the criminal justice respondents, approval of the concept was matched by a concern that PreStart does not adequately provide for public protection. Criminal justice agency representatives had mixed to low expectations of PreStart in terms of its ability to reduce new crimes, or lower the return rate of releasees to prison. Slightly more than two out of five respondents saw no difference between PreStart and previous parole services in terms of helping ex-offenders reintegrate into their communities.

Probably because of their lack of knowledge of alternative correctional interventions, social service agencies were more ambivalent about their expectations of PreStart. However, of the social service agencies who did respond to the survey, the overwhelming majority saw no significant regulatory, legal, or policy barriers, or any other obstacles, to service delivery for PreStart clients.

On the other hand, both criminal justice and social service agencies did identify gaps in services, primarily related to housing, employment and job training. Other needed services identified by respondents were in the areas of drug treatment and mental health.

Based on the above and other findings discussed in the interim report, the following recommendations are offered to the Department of Corrections for their consideration to enhance PreStart Programming. They include:

- \* Improve Community Service Center/institutional linkages;
- \* Promote activities that are likely to promote the eventual successful reintegration of offenders throughout their period of incarceration and link these efforts with PreStart programming;
- \* Increase presentations by outside resource providers;

- \* Involve successful ex-offenders as PreStart presenters as much as possible;
- \* Continue to develop relief strategies for classroom presenters;
- \* Establish an ongoing process to identify/evaluate and disseminate successful PreStart techniques;
- \* Continue attempts to have staff feel an "ownership" of the program;
- \* Enhance training programs for PreStart presenters and Phase II staff.
- \* Examine very closely the facilities in which inmates report negative attitudes towards PreStart and PreStart personnel. After assessing causes of these perceptions, take remedial actions.
- \* Allow inmates to provide systematic and meaningful feedback to facility and system personnel. Class evaluations should be routinized.
- \* IDOC should engage in efforts which promote the systematic and continuous exchange of information about the PreStart program between IDOC, criminal justice agency representatives, and allied social services agencies.
- \* A greater allocation of resources should be devoted to the Central Office to allow for an enhanced level of PreStart program development, administration, monitoring, and evaluation.

## CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF PRESTART AND CURRENT EVALUATIVE EFFORTS

The contemporary correctional era is one characterized by a search for cost-effective, community-based sanctions thought to enhance public safety. This search has been motivated by a tremendous influx of criminal justice clients without the benefit of commensurate increases in system capacities (see e.g., Illinois Special Commission on the Administration of Justice in Cook County, 1986; Morris and Tonry, 1990; Zimring and Hawkins, 1991). A revitalized debate on the mission and effectiveness of correctional treatment programs has also been a prominent aspect of the current correctional era (e.g., Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, and Cullen, 1990; Lab and Whitehead, 1990).

An outgrowth of these trends has been the exploration of alternative models of parole supervision. Nationally, the parole population grew by 107% from 1980 to 1989, and during 1989 the parole population grew at a faster rate than both the probation and prison populations (12%, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991). The vast bulk of this increase has been due to notable increases in the percent of inmates released into the community under mandatory supervised release structures rather than through discretionary parole release mechanisms (5.9% of prison releases in 1977 to 31.2% of releases in 1987; see Hester, 1988: 4). Because the philosophy behind mandatory supervised release programs is not anchored as firmly in the rehabilitative ideal as are traditional parole supervision models, the ideological premises of such supervision structures have been viewed by many observers as being relatively unclear (see e.g., Schiraldi, 1991). These client population trends and mounting philosophical questions about the role of post-incarceration release supervision practices in the continuum of correctional services, coupled with an increasing empirically derived skepticism that traditional parole supervision models promote public safety in a measurable manner (e.g., Flanagan, 1985), have led many states to reevaluate how and under what conditions inmates released from prison are allowed to reenter the community.

Illinois is one State that has recently begun the reevaluation of post-release services and supervision practices. Since the adoption of a determinate sentencing law in 1977, which ended discretionary parole release mechanisms for newly convicted offenders, Illinois has



mandated the supervised release of inmates released from prison. Supervision models remained similar to those found under earlier parole models, with offenders being supervised from one to three years based on the seriousness of the original conviction charge (Goodstein and Hepburn, 1985).

Facing significant budget constraints in the mid to latter part of the 1980s, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) gave greater priority to institutional corrections and began to downscale its Community Services Division, which administers the mandatory supervision release program. For instance, during the 1980s there have been lay-offs of parole staff en masse. The situation became one in which a credible parole supervision structure was impossible with the level of resources that had been allocated by the State.

With the introduction of the PreStart program, which began operations on July 1, 1991, Illinois introduced a bifurcated system into its mandatory supervised release program. Radically different from most parole supervision structures, PreStart separates the surveillance and supervision functions of parole from integrative social service provision functions. After mandated specialized institutional preparation for release (termed Phase I programming), the vast majority of releasees are allowed to voluntarily utilize community resources brokered through a system of newly developed Community Service Centers (CSC). The Service Centers are designed to be information and resource brokerage facilities, intended to promote the abilities of releasees to develop and implement effective employment, residential living, and treatment plans.

For releasees who present specific needs, Illinois has planned the implementation of specialized service delivery mechanisms: (a) four Community Drug Intervention Programs, which will provide services and drug testing for releasees posing manifest substance abuse needs; (b) contracted services for specialized interventions with selected sex offenders which will be available under the PreStart program; and (c) development of a Special Intensive Supervision Unit (SISU) to which certain releasees who are thought to pose enhanced risks to public safety, and those released from the Dixon Springs Shock Incarceration program, will be assigned. The Intensive Supervision Unit is the only component of the PreStart program that retains the traditional surveillance function of parole supervision. The total package of services and programs available for releasees in the community is termed Phase II

programming.

This brief description of the PreStart program clearly suggests that what the State of Illinois is attempting to do with inmates recently released from prison represents a significant departure from traditional parole supervision models. Thus, the introduction of the PreStart program represents a major correctional reform effort which necessarily entails widespread organizational and individual change.

In the spring of 1992, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (hereafter, the Authority) contracted with Southern Illinois University at Carbondale to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the PreStart program. The evaluation plan that was submitted and accepted called for the identification of the manifold factors which have and will help determine the formulation, implementation, and impact of the PreStart program. The following is the interim report of this evaluative effort, a report which focuses on the process by which PreStart was formulated and implemented. Primary attention is paid to Phase I programming. An analysis of Phase II implementation and PreStart impacts on inmate reintegration into the community will be the focus of subsequent reports.

### **Evaluation Plan**

The development and implementation of Illinois' PreStart program can be viewed, both for descriptive and analytic purposes, as a major organizational change effort in criminal justice. This change effort involves a significant transformation in the philosophy, structure, and practice by which inmates in the State of Illinois are conditionally allowed to reenter the community. An understanding of the PreStart program through systematic evaluation can be enhanced by examining the program as a reform which will eventually undergo all of the following distinct stages associated with planned change processes: diagnosis or conception, initiation, implementation, and routinization (Hage and Aiken, 1970). These stages present unique issues and associated research tasks for a thorough and sound understanding of the reform in question; thus the evaluation plan was organized in a manner consistent with these stages of the reform process. In this report, we examine the diagnosis and conception of the public policy environment of parole in Illinois which led to PreStart, the initiation of the program, and its subsequent implementation. Methodologies

employed to answer the questions that are posed are presented in the respective chapters. Further implementation analyses, and an assessment of operations during PreStart's routinization phase, will be presented in a report that will be issued in the Fall of 1993. The impact assessment will be presented in the project's final report, which will be issued in February of 1994.

## **Organization Of This Report**

Chapter Two deals with the genesis and initiation of parole reform in Illinois. National and statewide trends in prison and parole populations are examined along with responses to these trends and to harsh fiscal realities. Archival and interview data are used to follow Illinois corrections through shifts in correctional philosophy and practice. The chapter presents a detailed analysis of the turbulent socio-political environment from which PreStart emerged. The path travelled by PreStart from inception to implementation is depicted, and the manner in which key decisions throughout the developmental process affected the eventual shape of the program are examined. Finally, the impact that PreStart's particular development will have on its implementation is addressed.

Chapter Three presents an overview of system-wide implementation issues associated with PreStart and an implementation analysis of Phase I programming based on field studies conducted at 10 correctional institutions and 4 community correctional centers during the Summer and early Fall of 1992. Interview and self-administered questionnaire data from PreStart staff, interview and mass-administered questionnaire data from inmates, and observational data are the sources utilized. The Van Horn-Van Meter (1977) implementation model is used to highlight the factors associated with levels of implementation success across the facilities.

Chapter Four presents the reactions of inmates to Phase I programming. Over 400 inmates from 14 facilities provided their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the PreStart program in their facility. Inmates are very rarely asked to express what they think about correctional programming, but as is illustrated in this chapter, what they had to say may be much more telling about levels of implementation success than what is said by staff or external evaluators. This chapter reveals that despite the chaotic and pressured policy



arena in which PreStart was formulated and the less than ideal implementation environment that resulted, the Illinois Department of Corrections has put together a Phase I pre-release program that has been very well received by the vast majority of its consumers. It is perceived generally to provide inmates with practical and meaningful skills, attitudes, and information that will help them make a smoother transition into the community.

Chapter Five presents a descriptive overview of Phase II programming. Based on much more limited data than that used for the assessment of Phase I programming, this chapter explores in a very preliminary manner a variety of issues associated with Phase II programming. The details of Phase II implementation and the presentation of relevant data will be presented in a subsequent report.

Ultimately, the success of PreStart will be contingent upon a number of community-related variables: the range, quality, and number of services that exist to meet the needs of ex-offenders, the ability to integrate service delivery at the local level, and the acceptance of CSC clients. Even under the best conditions -- fully staffed CSCs, motivated and trained PreStart agents, releasees who are willing to seek assistance -- reintegration efforts will fail if necessary services are unavailable to released offenders or if community-based constituents of the program are not supportive. Chapter Six explores these issues based on the results of a survey of representatives from a variety of allied criminal justice and social service agencies conducted in November 1992. Unfortunately, the response rate to the mailed survey was poor; only about one-third of the surveys were returned. Though many of the survey respondents had limited awareness of, and information about, PreStart, the resulting information presents important material on the community's receptiveness to PreStart clients; allied agencies' perceptions and expectations regarding the impact of PreStart on existing services; the identification of obstacles hindering the delivery of existing community services to PreStart clients; and the identification of significant gaps in available services for PreStart clients.

Chapter Seven summarizes the major findings from this initial implementation effort and presents a variety of recommendations to enhance PreStart service delivery mechanisms and programming.



## CHAPTER TWO: THE GENESIS OF PRESTART

When evaluating both implementation and impact issues in large-scale reform efforts, it is necessary to understand the origins of the reform. "Social scientists concerned with criminal justice evaluations have begun to acknowledge that to better understand the nature of a reform's outcomes, it is necessary to acquire a thorough grasp of earlier stages in the reform process" (Goodstein and Hepburn, 1985: 1). The reform process is extremely complex, including a "temporal sequence of decision points through which a reform must pass before it is operational and capable of demonstrating an impact" (Goodstein and Hepburn, 1985: 2; see also Zalman, 1982; Berk, Burstein, and Nagel, 1980). Very often policy analysts examine a new policy by simply assuming that the policy creators have acted in a rational, goal-oriented manner, and so they use as a benchmark for evaluation the explicitly stated goals of the policy or legislation. If those goals are not achieved, or the targets of change do not alter their behavior in accordance with written policy directives or expectations, the policy will generally be considered a failure. This is a rather simplistic approach and will result in analysis with limited policy relevance.

The researcher must understand the motives and goals of the policy makers and the context of policy creation to assess the consequences of reform. Further, what transpires in the policy formulation process often foreshadows the nature of implementation (such as barriers to successful implementation, the extent of compliance with policy provisions, and linkages between responsible actors in the implementation process). In other words, evaluators must be aware of where a program began, and where it was headed, before deciding if it actually arrived there. Placing PreStart in an accurately described policy context and identifying the goals of PreStart is therefore the focus of this chapter.

The origins of PreStart stem from the process of diagnosis within the corrections policy arena in Illinois -- i.e., identification of problems and considerations for their solution. The ongoing process of diagnosis leads to the addition of new functions or the alteration of old practices. An important decision during this stage is "Which of several alternatives should be adopted?" An examination of the issues surrounding the policy formulation and the initiation of reform that led to PreStart will help in understanding the eventual shape of the

PreStart program and the expectations placed on the program by the Department of Corrections.

This chapter will follow PreStart from an idea (whose inception occurred perhaps years before actual formulation of the program) to the point of implementation. This will be done in two steps. First, a look at the national and statewide context of the reform will depict the driving forces behind what eventually became PreStart. Second, a "time-line" will be developed, delineating the path taken by the reform, according to information compiled during the evaluation. The chapter will conclude with a synthesis of the state-specific events and their influence at various stages of the policy reform.

### **National Trends Relating To Parole**

The following overview of national trends in parole during the past two decades illustrates how the Illinois experience, though unique, is reflective of larger trends in parole. During the 1970s and 1980s parole practices underwent significant reconceptualization and modification nationwide. The vast bulk of attention, criticism, and policy reform during this time frame was focused on parole as a mechanism of discretionary release from prison. However, parole supervision, the "other parole" as it has been labelled (Wilson, 1977), has also been undergoing dramatic change in the United States during the last 20 years.

For instance, 20 years ago one could go to any state in the nation and find a parole supervision function that would be quite similar to that which could be found in any other state. This is no longer the case. Diverse parole strategies and program designs have emerged throughout the nation.

The main factors giving impetus to these changes are the organizational restructuring of the components making up the correctional system, a shift in correctional philosophies based on questions of efficacy surrounding current practices, and increasing correctional populations coupled with decreasing correctional budgets.

### **Organizational Restructuring**

Over the past 20 years numerous commissions and study groups have recommended that criminal justice agencies unify separate entities involved in corrections related functions.

These ideas were based on assumptions of a need for cohesion among the components of corrections and criminal justice that were increasingly being viewed as systems (Smykla, 1984). In fact, this was a driving force in the move away from an independent model of paroling authority, (i.e., one in which the paroling entity was an autonomous body with the sole authority over parole release and parole supervision). Rather, a consolidated model was implemented in many states, where the paroling authority was incorporated into a larger correctional agency as a sub-unit, or where the paroling authority remained an autonomous unit but the supervision of those on community release was performed by staff of a larger corrections department. These changes were primarily intended to better serve the offender, but also to emphasize correctional efforts in providing public safety. One result for community corrections is that parole became less of a priority program within the total corrections system as its autonomous authority over releasees was diluted.

### **Philosophical Shifts/Questions of Effectiveness**

A second major pressure impacting the contour of parole during this period was the growing disenchantment with the rehabilitative model and offender treatment in general. As Palmer notes:

From the 1960s to 1970s there was a broad surge of confidence regarding rehabilitation's ability to change and control offenders on a short- as well as long-term basis. This high optimism was quickly followed by widespread pessimism from 1975 to 1981, a period that was triggered by Martison's (1974) mid-1970s critique of rehabilitation's presumed effectiveness (1992:3).

This discontent with treatment effectiveness was accompanied by the presentation of David Fogel's (1975) *justice model* and Andrew von Hirsh's (1976) *just deserts model*, both of which sounded calls for the elimination of the indeterminant sentence and discretionary parole release. Many states have heeded these calls, enacting determinate sentencing structures and abolishing discretionary parole release mechanisms.

### ***Parole Supervision Effectiveness***

It was not surprising that parole supervision as well as discretionary parole release



would come under attack. Yet as the effectiveness of parole supervision was questioned it became apparent that there were woefully few sound research studies that addressed questions of parole supervision efficacy. While some studies existed, their results were not easily pooled. Differing definitions of parole failure, recidivism and other key issues had been applied. Even the ultimate question of what should be considered "effective" in supervision -- e.g., lower recidivism for those supervised, ease of reintegration into the community, the provision of services based on knowledge of offender need -- was left unanswered.

Flanagan (1985) offers a succinct and extensive review of the parole effectiveness literature. His conclusion is not reassuring for those strongly supportive of traditional parole supervision strategies: The empirical research on the effectiveness of parole supervision as a method of reducing recidivism has been equivocal at best. The most that can be concluded from extant research is that traditional supervision practices may delay recidivism for a relatively short period of time for certain offenders. Thus, experimentation with altered parole supervision strategies has not been driven by knowledge about "what works" (in terms of the adjustment of released offenders into the community) as much as it has been shaped by knowledge of what does not work.

It is not necessarily the case that "nothing works" in general, or that parole supervision is ineffective in curtailing recidivism, given the sometimes insurmountable methodological difficulties in measuring correctional program effectiveness accurately. However, common perceptions of what is or is not effective, regardless of the validity of those perceptions help to drive the political decisions which shape correctional policies.

### **Trends in Correctional Populations and Budgets**

The third major force shaping the change in parole during this period was the growth in correctional populations and the overcrowding problem. Nationally this has been attributed to an increasing number of convicted offenders incarcerated under mandatory sentencing provisions. As Blumstein noted in 1988, incarceration rates had been relatively stable in the U.S. from the mid-1920s until the 1970s, then had climbed dramatically, nearly tripling by 1988. Following this growth in prison populations was a proportional growth in release

populations (see Table 2.1). During the mid-1980s many state correctional systems embarked on ambitious prison construction programs to deal with the population growth and overcrowding. However, as these building programs gained momentum, many states also began facing shrinking revenues and budget shortfalls. This prompted the question: What should be done with the increasing parole population given the reductions in appropriations for parole services?

**TABLE 2.1**  
**PAROLE POPULATIONS AND RATES**

Year	Parole Population (as of December 31)	Rate of persons on parole (per 100,000 adult residents)
1984	185,100	138
1984	226,200	136
1984	266,992	155
1988	407,977	201
1990	531,407	287

\* Source: *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*, various years: 1978-1990

### The Results for Parole Supervision

Responses to these forces, as noted above, have been varied. However, definite patterns have emerged. Certain States, such as New York and Texas, have not abandoned discretionary parole release. However, forced to handle bulging parole populations in the face of fiscal distress, they have responded to public demands for offender accountability by utilizing a variety of innovative case management techniques. New York now uses a differential case supervision strategy in which the bulk of parole resources are allocated to offenders "who pose the greatest risk to the community, those recently released from prison" (New York State Division of Parole, 1990: 16). The State of Texas serves as an example for states attempting to develop innovative programming for special populations. Since the mid-

1980s Texas has introduced a variety of special programs to most efficiently target resources on specific areas of need and to enhance the prospect of successful rehabilitation through special treatment modes. Included are an electronic monitoring program that intends to promote public safety by closely monitoring high risk offenders on reduced caseloads (25:1 releasee/officer ratio); a large intensive parole program; specialized small caseloads for sex offenders, mentally impaired offenders, mentally retarded offenders, and substance abusers; and intermediate sanction facilities (with 1,097 beds) designed to house low risk releasees who are being held in county jails for violations of the terms and conditions of their release agreements in an attempt to reduce prison re-admissions (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 1991).

The States of Maine and Florida illustrate how the adoption of determinacy in sentencing and the abolition of parole supervision has resulted in the creation of little known functional equivalents to parole supervision. For instance, Maine is often discussed as a State that has eliminated parole supervision altogether without witnessing increasing crime as a result (Tonry, 1990). In reality, through the latter half of the 1980s less than 40 percent of Maine's prisoners were unconditionally released into the community. The vast majority of those conditionally released were placed on probation after their term of imprisonment expired (i.e., judicial parole). Thus, an adaptation was made subsequent to the abolishment of parole supervision to ensure that at least some of the functions of parole supervision continued. Likewise, although parole supervision was abolished in Florida in 1983, a form of parole supervision was reintroduced in 1989 that covers about 70 percent of total correctional releasees. Among this group, however, about a quarter of releases are released without required supervision. Thus, demands for releasee accountability persist in these States and innovative adoptions have been introduced to assure that at least some releasees are supervised in the community.

Recent attempts to reform the California parole system have paralleled changes in Illinois' parole system, as reflected by PreStart. In California, a Blue Ribbon Commission on Inmate Population Management recently recommended an overhaul of parole operations along similar lines to those evidenced by PreStart (Schiraldi 1991). The Commission's recommendations included the following:



(1) Minimize or eliminate the supervision/revocation function of parole. Post-release supervision would be abolished or shortened for all or mostly all parolees. Unsupervised parolees would be revoked and returned to prison only if apprehended by the police.

(2) Reallocate the funds that were previously spent on supervision functions to pay for rehabilitative services. The community-based treatment programs would offer a variety of services including drug rehabilitation, job training, and housing assistance.

(3) Increase the use of pre-release programs in prison in order to equip inmates with basic skills for successful functioning in the community.

Although these recommendations were rejected by Governor Wilson, California has taken a number of more modest initiatives in altering parole practices and the costs they generate. Included prominently are a variety of policies that serve to reduce technical violation rates (The Sacramento Bee, June 6, 1992: B6). The above developments in parole indicate that what is happening in Illinois, with regard to parole supervision, reflects a variety of factors evident nationwide which have resulted in a broad questioning of traditional parole supervision structures and a good level of related experimentation and innovation. Indeed, when attention turns to the specific situation in Illinois the factors leading to the origins of the reform embodied by PreStart highly parallel the above discussed national trends.

## **The Context of Reform in Illinois Methodology**

### **Methodology**

The data used to analyze the policy formulation process resulting in PreStart comes from the following sources: Interviews with key decision makers, Illinois Department of Corrections archival data, published statistical reports, and newspaper coverage of correctional issues.

Face to face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key policy makers who were central actors in the formulation and development of the PreStart program. Beginning with key figures in the funding agency and the Illinois Department of Corrections, and

proceeding to other key figures identified through the use of judgmental and snowball sampling techniques, about a dozen key policy makers were asked a series of open ended questions regarding the conceptualization and genesis of the PreStart program. Their observations were compared internally with those of lower ranking members in the corrections organization to assess the consistency of responses. Overall, the "oral histories" presented by the respondents exhibited a great deal of congruence. The way in which responses differed included the emphasis placed on particular factors and the timing of decisions. It should be emphasized that when direct quotes are used, they reflect thoughts and feelings observed repeatedly from respondents. The particular quotes chosen for inclusion were selected on the following basis: They reflect the common responses derived from interviews, and that they succinctly state the issue involved.

Four types of archival data were sought to assess the more "formal" history of PreStart's development. These included annual planning and policy documents made public by IDOC, published and unpublished statistical reports generated by IDOC, governmental task force reports, and internal memos.

The Chicago Tribune, from 1985 to present, was searched for articles dealing with State correctional and parole service issues. A search of the Springfield State Journal-Register for the summer of 1991 was conducted to include analysis of the perspective of the correctional environment in Illinois during the time the reform was conceptualized and initiated. Though only two State newspapers were utilized, it seems logical that if it did not appear in the State's most prominent newspaper, nor in the newspaper originating in the State Capitol where the discussions and decisions were taking place, then chances are, related stories important in archiving and potentially influencing the policy arena did not appear in any other Illinois newspapers.

Taken together, these sources provide a rich understanding of the context in which PreStart has emerged, the history of the inception, planning and development of the PreStart program, and program goals and objectives. These sources of information will be synthesized to analyze the reform involved in initiating PreStart and to delineate the path from idea to implementation.

## **The Policy Context**

With the national trends in corrections and parole in mind, a closer look at how Illinois was affected by the national level trends as well as by State-specific events will depict the context in which the PreStart program was created.

### *Sentencing and Criminal Code Reform*

A critical change impacting the contemporary operations of the Illinois Department of Corrections was the reform of criminal sentencing laws in Illinois in the mid-to-late 1970s. This period saw legislators responding to what they perceived as a public demanding tougher criminal laws which emphasized retribution over rehabilitation. Many bills were introduced into the Legislature that called for mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses and the lengthening of prison stays (Bagley, 1979 as cited in Goodstein and Hepburn, 1985). In 1975 the number of crime-related bills circulating in the Illinois Legislature prompted a study by the Illinois House Judiciary II Committee which was to result in significant revision of the Illinois criminal code.

On December 28, 1977 a determinate sentencing law was signed by Governor Thompson which went into effect on February 1, 1978. This was generally seen as "ushering in a new era...one in which sentences would be both fairer...and, where warranted, far more severe than had previously been authorized by law" (Schuwerk, 1984: 632). With the introduction of determinate sentencing came the abolition of discretionary parole release for newly convicted offenders and many other consequences which would shape parole reform even into the early 1990s. The end of discretionary parole release for all offenders except those that were convicted before the legislation went into effect, however, was not accompanied by an abandonment of mandated terms of supervision for released offenders. The legislation mandated terms of supervision in the community for released offenders ranging from one to three years, depending on initial conviction charges (Mandatory Supervised Release), and traditional parole structures remained for those incarcerated under indeterminate sentencing.

Another related change was the abolition of the Parole Board. The board was not so much replaced, as it was converted into the Prisoner Review Board (PRB), having some of

the same members and functions of the previous Parole Board. The PRB is an agency of State government autonomous from the Department of Corrections, and plays a key role in the new release/supervision system as it is the body empowered to determine the conditions of release, impose sanctions for violations, and revoke an ex-prisoner's conditional release status (Ill. Stat. Rev. 1978, Chapt. 38, sec. 1003-3-1(a)(5)).

Accompanying determinacy in Illinois, the late 1970s and 1980s have seen the introduction of a number of mandatory minimum sentencing laws (e.g., Class X legislation) and other pieces of legislation targeting certain offender subgroups. These statutory revisions, such as the Habitual Offender Act (Illinois Revised statutes, Chapter 38 Section, 33-B-1), have resulted in a greater percentage of those convicted going to prison and remaining there for longer periods of time.

### *Correctional Populations and Expenditures*

As elsewhere in the nation, correctional populations in Illinois skyrocketed in the years subsequent to these legislated changes. The State's prison population doubled between 1982 and 1992, after doubling in the ten years prior to that. Despite opening up 14 new prisons between 1978 and 1991, the prison system is more overcrowded than ever -- housing over 30,000 inmates in a system designed to hold only about 20,000 -- raising serious cries and efforts to forestall the growth in prison populations and overcrowding (The Illinois Task Force on Crime and Corrections, 1992).

Due to population growth and concerns with maintaining the safety of prisoners and institutional staff, the Illinois Department of Corrections' operational spending budget has more than tripled since 1975, even when accounting for inflation. Within the agency an increasing portion of the budget has been devoted to adult institutional corrections. For instance, total appropriations for FY 92 were \$567 million, nearly 80 percent of which goes towards operating adult institutions. By contrast, less than 60 percent of the Department's operating budget in FY 75 went toward adult prisons (Illinois Task Force on Crime and Corrections, 1992: 11-12). Expenditures for community supervision remained relatively stable throughout the 1980s going from \$4.2 million in 1979 to \$4.46 million in 1989 (IDOC, undated a: 90; IDOC, April, 1989: 127), despite the tremendous increase in IDOC's

overall budget.

Within these fiscal constraints, the Community Services Division of the Department of Corrections has operated under the mandate of supervising an ever increasing releasee population. As can be seen in Table 2.2, the number of admissions to community supervision between 1982 and 1991 more than doubled, while the average daily population of releasees increased 81 percent. From 1980 to 1987, the increase in parole populations was accompanied by a gradual decrease in the number of parole agents. Significant layoffs occurred in 1983. The rehiring of some parole agents took place shortly thereafter; but in 1987 another budget cut resulted in more than half of the existing parole staff being laid off. Afterwards, the average number of parole agents gradually increased through 1991, but not at a rate fast enough to bring average caseloads to levels found in the early 1980s. In fact, the average caseload in 1991 was more than twice the caseload in 1982, and almost four times the recommended caseload of the American Correctional Association. If one considers variation in caseload size within regions of the State, the numbers are even more staggering, with some Chicago-based parole agents carrying caseloads of over 300.

The consequences of the above trends were reflected in the declining average cost of providing services and surveillance to releasees. For instance, the average cost per monthly population of releasees was \$564 in FY 1981 and \$350 in FY 1989. The average cost per releasee in FY 1981 was \$319 (IDOC, undated b: 93) and in FY 1989 was \$196 (IDOC, April, 1990: 150). This reflects a major reduction in resource dollars allocated to this group. In terms of potential supervision provided releasees, the amount of hours available for supervision per releasee per month in 1985 was 1.7. By 1989 this had dropped to 1.2 hours (IDOC, April, 1990: 22). In terms of comparisons to other states the level of resources devoted to parole supervision in Illinois is strikingly lower. In 1989 Illinois spent \$0.96 per parolee per day. In contrast, California spent \$9.86 per day, New York spent \$6.58 and Indiana spent \$3.75 per day (IDOC, April, 1991: 30). While these figures are suggestive, it is unclear whether these cost figures are directly comparable across states because of potential differences in the classification and recording of appropriation data (e.g., whether figures include general state revenue dollars only). What is clear is that parole in Illinois was facing harsh fiscal realities which impacted the amount of money available for use in



delivering parole services.

### **Philosophical Shifts Regarding Parole Supervision**

The priority given to the Community Services Division within IDOC reflects changing correctional philosophies that have influenced the policy changes in parole supervision in Illinois. Parole agents have often been noted as having the difficult position of being both advocate and enforcer for the releasees assigned them. The philosophical shifts within IDOC concerning the appropriate role of parole -- law enforcement officer versus counselor-- have been pronounced during the last thirty years.

During the 1960s parole agents in Illinois were to serve mainly a law enforcement function, enforcing parole rules on inmates released to the community prior to the completion of their sentences (under indeterminate sentencing).

The focus of community supervision was on the protection and safety of the community....This strict reliance on enforcement of parole rules caused some inmates to be more apprehensive of parole agents than the police. The police could detain an inmate for a violation of a law, while the parole agent could have an inmate returned to prison for violation of a parole rule which was not necessarily a violation of law. (IDOC, Undated, c: 89)

In the late 1960s and 1970s, the focus on law enforcement shifted towards a counseling perspective, as parole agents began to identify inmate needs (e.g., suitable housing, employment opportunities, assistance dealing with alcohol and drug dependencies) that directly affected the violation of parole rules. In response to these changes the Department underwent legislated change, adding work and day release centers to create a "structured release environment leading to an incident-free adjustment to the community" (IDOC, Undated, c: 89).

Philosophical shifts dramatically affected the operations of community supervision during the 1980s. A comparison of the mission statements of community supervision during the decade is illustrative. The 1981 Plan for Human Services cites the following as the mission statement for community supervision:

To maximize the probability of successful reintegration through the provision of quality community-based services consistent with the needs of the offender under State

jurisdiction while protecting the safety of the public (IDOC, undated d: 94).

The related purpose statement noted that:

Community supervision is provided for the delivery of services to offenders released from correctional facilities into the community and for the protection of that community... (IDOC, undated d: 88).

This purpose statement had changed by 1984 to read:

The purpose of community supervision is to monitor offenders released from correctional facilities for the protection of the community into which the offender is released and to provide necessary services in order to assist releasees in making a successful re-entry to their community. (IDOC, undated e: 102).

Interestingly enough, this latter statement of purpose was coupled with the mission statement from 1981 emphasizing successful reintegration and delivery of services.

By 1987 further changes had been made in the mission and purpose statements of the Community Services Division. The Annual Human Services Plan stated that the departmental goal "to re-emphasize [the] public safety priority of Community Supervision" (IDOC, undated f: 128) had been met. This goal was achieved by the publishing of a mission statement reflective of the emphasis; it read: "To assist in the protection of the public by minimizing the unlawful conduct of prison releasees through a system of differential supervision" (IDOC undated f: 128).

A system of differential supervision was first introduced by IDOC in 1979 as part of a pilot project to explore the viability of a offender case classification system adapted from the National Institute of Corrections' model. An individual's supervision level would be determined by his/her assessed risk and needs score. Persons with high risk scores would be given a higher supervision level with a focus on surveillance, whereas persons with a high needs score would also be given a higher supervision level but the focus would be on the delivery of services. The program was expanded statewide in 1980-1981 and was utilized until 1987. The differential supervision model was reflective of IDOC's parole philosophy of offender supervision balanced with delivery of services.

Changes in the correctional philosophy of parole during the late 1980s reflected the pragmatic organizational realities facing IDOC in light of increasing parole populations and

the ability of existing resources to serve both a surveillance and casework function. Some current IDOC staff suggest that changes in correctional philosophy during this time period also reflected the ability of the then incumbent Director to translate his own views into correctional policy. As one high ranking IDOC official related:

The [correctional] era [in the mid-to-late 1980s] brought order and operational cohesiveness to the department, but it also brought 'cold, logical processing.' There was no growth in programs attempting to affect behavioral change. This...era was an era of health/safety/sanitation (Zone Supervisor, personal communication, March 18, 1993).

Under the IDOC Director in office during most of the 80s, adult institutional corrections dominated the priority structure within the department. A key concern was the amount of bedspace, and much of the policy and programming of this era seems to have been based directly on monetary allocations. If a theoretical correctional model were to be applied to this time period, it would most likely be the punishment model. Those who committed crimes were to serve their time in Illinois' correctional institutions under the most sanitary and safe conditions possible.

The above-mentioned re-emphasis of community safety as it related to parole supervision policies was reflected in a verbal directive from the IDOC Director. Prompted by some allegations that implied parole agents might be unaware of where their parolees were, the directive mandated that a warrant be written up on a parolee if s/he failed to appear for a once-a-month report. If the warrant was not written up, it would mean a disciplinary write up from that agent's supervisor.

Whether or not agents were disciplined because of this directive is unclear; however, it is clear that this was the perception of parole staff at the time. One IDOC PreStart staff who had been a parole agent during that time recalled: "During the end of [this] era, it was a 'violate everything that moves edict'" (personal communications, August 19, 1992). Another IDOC administrator pointed out that the Director had gone as far as saying that until the parole supervision function was fully in place--i.e., until each officer knew where each parolee was and each parolee submitted his/her monthly report--officers were not to engage in any social work. Officers took this quite literally, and parole took on a "lock 'em up"



approach with the emphasis being monitoring and offender surveillance. Under the IDOC Director at this time, the emphasis was also placed on agent accountability. Enforcement of the monthly report rule was emphasized. At this point neither counseling nor service delivery was practical. In a related development, the differential parole supervision system was abandoned. It was simply no longer feasible, given average parole caseloads, to vary supervision strategies based on offender risk or need.

These changes, especially the policy regarding strict adherence to the monthly report rule, had pronounced effects on technical violation rates and the rate of releasees being returned to prison. As can be found in Table 2.2, from 1979 to 1984 the number of releasees charged with a technical violation was consistently smaller than the number of releasees charged with a new offense. In 1986 and 1987 figures for both types of failures on supervision indicate that a much greater percentage of failures were the result of technical violations than the result of new arrests (63 percent compared with 37 percent, respectively, in 1987). With massive parole agent layoffs in 1988, the failure rates became more balanced between categories of failure, but by 1990 when the parole staff had returned to pre-layoff levels almost 1,000 more parolees were charged with technical violations than with new crimes (1,779 releasees charged with new crimes compared to 2,773 charged with technical violations in 1990).

The preceding discussion presents the major dimensions of the correctional policy context which generated demands for a restructuring of parole services in Illinois. Prison overcrowding in a system which had witnessed a major de-emphasis of behavioral change programming and offender reintegration into the community, a parole system associated with a high technical violation rate seen as contributing to prison populations, and impending statewide fiscal distress all resulted in a crisis situation for adult corrections. A volatile and potentially open policy-making dynamic was in place. As has been the case with many of the more dramatic reforms in corrections (e.g., the deinstitutionalization of juvenile corrections in Massachusetts, Miller, Ohlin, and Coates, 1977), "crisis" opened the system to significant system-level change.

## **Time-Line of PreStart Development**

Given the above policy context, "When, where, and how did PreStart begin, and who was involved?" The answers to these questions are different depending on the source of information. What follows is a history of PreStart's conception and development. The origins of PreStart will be addressed from two vantage points. First, public perception is presented based on public information. Next, the perspective of top-level IDOC administrators and key decision makers closely involved in the reform is offered.

If an Illinois citizen wanted to know the origins of PreStart, seemingly her/his only sources of information would be a few newspaper articles, and some of the IDOC documents (made public annually by the Department) which mention the restructuring of adult parole, and which briefly explain the new system.

### **What Did the Newspapers Say?**

The one article that called PreStart by name was found in the May 10, 1991 issue of the Springfield State Journal Register (Clarke, 1991). The article begins with the laments of Illinois parole agents, facing yet another severe cut-back. In the article, IDOC's Director is quoted as saying that

[Governor] Edgar wants to upgrade a program called Pre-start, which allows parole officers to focus intensively on the inmates for the 2-3 months prior to release from prison....The program would teach the convicts job and life skills to get the parolees back on their feet, reducing parole supervision. (Clarke, 1991: 12)

The article notes a parole agents' argument that this program was not designed to replace parole agents, but rather to augment the current system.

An article, not too flatteringly titled "Parole System a Bad Joke that May Get Worse," (Reckentenwald & Karwath, 1991) appeared in the Tribune shortly before the May 10th State Register article (April 7th, 1991). This article makes mention of PreStart, though not by name, saying only that

Edgar...proposed starting parole classes in prisons to tell inmates before they are released exactly what will be expected of them. The program's goal is to reduce the number of parolees returning to prison. Edgar also proposed making parole 'more intensive' in the first year...

One more article (Spanier, 1991), appearing in the Springfield State Journal -Register, also discussed a change in the parole system. This June 30 article added a bit more information, while not mentioning the points above. It quoted the IDOC spokesperson as saying that the parole system would be restructured to cost less. This would be done by having high-risk inmates receive the most supervision while low-risk inmates receive only occasional attention.

While the average citizen would have read only a small amount about PreStart in the newspapers, and found some of the information to be conflicting, there was quite a bit of coverage devoted to corrections. Articles concerning budget constraints, the ever-present threat of parole lay-offs, and increasingly crowded conditions in prisons and on parole appeared almost weekly.

### **What Did IDOC Public Documents Say?**

If the citizen's curiosity was not satisfied by the minimal attention PreStart received from the print media, s/he might obtain copies of IDOC planning documents, one of the most notable of which is the annual Human Services Plan. In these, the steps of change can be followed, beginning with the April 1990 document which discusses possible future changes in a section titled "Returning to More Manageable Caseloads." Though the section addresses "the continued hiring of parole agents during fiscal year 1990" as a source for bringing caseloads to more manageable levels, IDOC projected an increase of only one parole agent between FY 89 and FY 91 (IDOC, April, 1990: 22).

The option of reducing caseloads through hiring of staff and shorter terms of supervision for a large number of releasees was realized to be unfeasible, for as the document stated: "the FY 91 budget will accommodate only the existence of current staff and services..." (IDOC, April, 1990: 23). Another option was to take seriously the recommendations of a recently issued report by the Task Force on Released Inmates. The Blue Ribbon Task Force had been appointed by the Illinois Legislature to "conduct a comprehensive study of the problems facing persons released from correctional facilities and to make recommendations regarding solutions to those problems..." (IDOC, 1990: iv). The Task Force's recommendations centered around a "standard, comprehensive release school"

to be implemented in IDOC facilities, and a variety of institutional treatment programming. The expansion of community correctional center beds, a reassessment of parole supervision practices and a reduction in caseloads, and greater service delivery to releasees were also recommended. Ultimately, and consistent with the recommendations of the Task Force, the challenge was raised for creative and bold policies and new strategies to reduce caseloads and provide community support services to assist inmates in their transition into the community (IDOC, 1990).

In the following year, the Human Services Plan reports the Department's strategy for a complete restructuring of adult parole. Here a pre-release function is described. It includes the development of an "individualized development plan" (IDP) guided by counselor, educator and medical staff (as well as self) assessment. It also discusses the instruction and counseling that an inmate will receive prior to release to aid in the transition. The topics to be included are:

independent living, life skills, self-esteem, employment counseling, job placement, residential placement, substance abuse counseling and programs, AIDS programs and services, family and individual counseling, availability of Federal, State, and local agency services; and, services provided by local social and civic organizations. (IDOC, April, 1991:31)

The Post-Release function of agents is described as aiding in the implementation of the individual development plan, serving as broker of services available to assist the offender for up to three months after release, and perhaps teaching classes that may be offered on some of the key areas mentioned in pre-release instruction.

The section on restructuring parole ends with a call for the amendment of statutes governing parole and mandatory supervised release. These amendments are important since they are necessary for the implementation of such a restructuring, and since (as the report states): "The Department will continue to refine this program for implementation in fiscal year 1992" (IDOC, April, 1991: 31).

In the 1991 document there are two sections dealing with PreStart. The first discusses its implementation and gives an overview of the program. Supervision is mentioned only in terms of high risk releasees who are placed under the Special Intensive Supervision Unit.

Parole agents (called 'Phase II' agents) are to "assist releasees...facilitate referrals...be available in their service center...[to] basically broker services by informing...inmates of the services available" (IDOC, August, 1992: 69-70).

### **What Did Key Decision Makers Say?**

A review of the above public documents suggests that PreStart and the reform of adult parole in Illinois was a change process that took place relatively quickly as a response to long-standing concerns about the viability of extant parole services. However, at the key policy maker level the picture broadens somewhat, with themes emerging that parallel those commonly identified in the criminal justice reform process. For instance, many studies suggest that criminal justice elites -- which include a small number of key and interested politicians and staff, along with criminal justice personnel -- typically determine changes in the criminal justice system with minimal public involvement or challenge (Berk, Brackman, and Lesser, 1977; Fairchild, 1981). This appears true in the present instance; the decision making surrounding PreStart seems to have been centered at a relatively high level of administration including the two Directors of IDOC presiding over the agency from late 1990 to the middle of 1991, a few key staff of the Community Services Division, the Governor's Office and Bureau of the Budget staff, and personnel at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (the funding agency).

### **Where Did the Idea Begin?**

Once the formulation of PreStart policy is viewed at this level, it can be seen that the seed for the ideas incorporated in the reforms of PreStart were evident in Illinois corrections and parole long before any Task Force or Pilot study was begun. Planning for parole reform was actually more elongated and oriented towards the eventual outcomes than is evidenced by a review of public documents.

Many of the goals and expectations surrounding parole reform were driven by situational factors. For example, one desire of IDOC was a more effective use of parole agents, while another intention was to address the number of parole revocations which had been exacerbating the already insurmountable problem of overcrowding in Illinois prisons.



The immediate problem, however, was the inability of the State budget to fund the Department of Corrections in Illinois so that it could function at any level other than sheer maintenance--and even that was tenuous.

### *From Idea to Program*

The seeds for such a restructuring of parole had been present for some time; from criticisms of parole made by an inmate advocacy group many years prior to PreStart's inception, to complaints from parole staff and the employee union centering around fiscal and caseload realities, to the legislature's call for a task force to study issues and problems of released inmates and parole in Illinois. The relationship of the Department to interest groups, to the union of its employees (AFSCME), and to the legislature that decided both budgetary issues and statutory amendments were important to the development of PreStart.

As indicated earlier, the first formulative step involved in the change was a Legislative Task Force on Released Inmates. The Task Force's unpublished report came out in December of 1989, and initially, not much was done with the recommendations made by the Task Force. This was perhaps due to basic philosophical differences between the programmatic changes recommended and the views of the then IDOC Director. With that Director's exit in 1990, and a new Director taking over, came a change in the underlying philosophies of the Department. The new Director was characterized by IDOC staff who worked under him during 1990 and 1991 as being an advocate of rehabilitation, based on his belief that the correctional system ought to (at least attempt to) facilitate behavioral change in offenders. This belief would affect the Director's approach to the "parole problem" Illinois was facing and would be a major impetus in the development of the PreStart reform by laying the groundwork necessary for the program to be realized. At this point, the Director, a strong supporter of pre-release programming, directed the Deputy Director of Community Services to act on some of the Task Force recommendations, specifically the suggestion for pre-release programming. The Deputy Director contracted with a former elementary school principal to develop a pre-release program which was eventually implemented as a pilot study titled "PROJECT PreStart" at the East Moline Community Correctional Center. While the program was being developed for the pilot study, the contractee, inexperienced in

correctional issues, sought advice from IDOC personnel. Again, the ideological convictions of those key in the development process became apparent as the program took shape. Some of the key players in assisting the contractee were advocates of an assistance model of parole, and this would be reflected in what became the PreStart program.

Although there is not much documentation of the pilot study and its results, a report authored by the contractee indicated that it was hoped that the pilot study would "...in some small way initiate change, innovation, and program planning...". While relevant program evaluation data were not included in the report, its author stated that "this work will amply confirm the need for a Pre-Release/Release School Program, and set the stage for more...research, development, and program/project planning." (Carr, 1990). Despite the lack of a rigorous program evaluation, this pilot project would serve as a model for a significant component of parole reform.

During this same time period, it was becoming apparent that the budget crisis in Illinois could mean significant reductions for IDOC's budget in FY 92. Because IDOC's primary focus is and has been security for adult institutions (reflecting about 80 percent of the budget), budget cuts meant that just about everything else was fair game for the budget axe. As a number of interviewees noted, given the fact that there was a general feeling that parole was losing its effectiveness, it was certainly thought that parole services was on the budget "hit list."

Negotiations between IDOC and the Governor's Office took place in the winter and early spring of 1991. During these discussions it was indicated that the Governor's Office wanted changes in community supervision in a manner consistent with the general themes found in the Task Force on Released Inmates' recommendations. It also became clear that the Governor's Office was going to stand strong on the proposed budget cuts. One option for IDOC was to eliminate or radically reduce parole staff. The acting IDOC Director believed that the consequences within the current parole structure would be disastrous, but that a reduction in staffing could be done within a new parole structure. Either way, PROJECT PreStart (which at the time consisted of only the pre-release program as piloted at the E. Moline Correctional Center) was seen as a way to soften the potential loss of aftercare.

The Governor's Office was reported as being supportive of the PreStart concept from



the beginning, due in part to the realization that alternatively it would cost millions to bring parole caseloads down to a manageable level, and in part to the belief that current supervision practices were ineffective. It was announced in the Governor's budget address, however, that severe lay-offs would hit parole services in the State. Thus, the support of the Governor's Office appeared more conceptual than financial in nature.

As mentioned, the original PreStart package did not involve post-release components (later termed Phase II programming). Pre-release programming (later termed Phase I programming) was intended to address inmate needs, releasing individuals who would then be less likely to recidivate. However, other states that had been developing pre-release programming all stressed the need for an aftercare component. This was also true in Illinois, as both the Task Force on Released Inmates and the E. Moline Pilot Study stressed, but the critical issue in Illinois was the source and level of funding for aftercare services.

In April 1991, nearing the beginning of the next fiscal year, a new IDOC Director took over. Characterized as advocating a reintegration philosophy of corrections with a major emphasis being placed on community-based change efforts in the prevention of crime and recidivism, this Director had concerns about aftercare services and believed that a new approach to aftercare would be required. As a proponent of inmate advocacy, the new Director believed in putting more direct responsibility on inmates and releasees in their attempts to "reform." For the latest IDOC Director, corrections is more than security; behavior change should be at least a co-equal goal.

At about the same time that this Director took office, IDOC apparently became aware that Federal monies were possibly available from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (the Authority) to fund some aspects of parole services. The Authority became involved as IDOC applied for Federal grant money to fund PreStart. It was during this process that PreStart took the shape in which it was eventually implemented.

The new IDOC Director, very early in his tenure, was active in encouraging and facilitating the transition to PreStart. While the support of the Governor's Office was noted above, some key respondents believe that full support came only after the new IDOC Director convinced the Governor's Office that the program was both feasible and desirable. The Director was also busy convincing legislators as to the merits of parole reform.

(Legislators who at the same time were at the same time being lobbied to retain parole services as they existed by parole agents expecting to be laid off.) Luncheons were held with Illinois sheriffs, chiefs of police, and State's attorneys to help ease their fears about this radical restructuring of parole; to let them know, for instance, that warrants would still be available; releasees would be held accountable in Illinois.

During the spring of 1991, the original PreStart concept was expanded to include community supervision components. The development of Community Service programming, now called Phase II PreStart, was created partially due to the fact that the Authority could not use the designated federal funds to support programs already in existence. Only newly created ones could be funded. For this reason the restructuring of parole in Illinois became "Phase II PreStart," a completely new program with Authority funding. There is some evidence that the Governor's Office may have been influential in facilitating the process of securing Authority funding for the components of PreStart. At this time, the development of PreStart was also influenced by the Authority. Partially in response to the Authority's requirement that the program be "evaluable," target populations were more clearly defined, and Phase II programming and training issues were addressed.

The timing for implementation of parole reform in Illinois was July 1, 1991. This meant that the entire program package which had been developed perhaps as late as May of 1991, would be translated into action within a few short months. By some accounts the decision to begin the program on July 1, 1991 was premised on the desire to save parole agents from layoffs slated to commence on that date when the State's current fiscal year would end. Obviously, not much time was available for comprehensive program planning and development.

### **Summary of Policy Origin**

The evolutionary process of PreStart occurred in an environment of fiscal constraints, amid a general dissatisfaction with the aftercare services as they were operating throughout the late 1980s. These factors, combined with changing correctional philosophies, severe State budget cuts, and the availability of external funding, made PreStart possible.

The components now included in PreStart were not ever packaged together within a

coherent conceptual framework until immediately preceding its implementation (May or June 1991). What happened was incremental, with additions being made from a base of increased emphasis on pre-release planning and life skills schooling. Phase II components seem to have resulted out of a loss of general revenue funds and the availability of Federal dollars.

The utilization of community services on a voluntary basis and advocacy coupled with intensive parole and community drug treatment on a mandated basis reflects the abbreviated planning process. Was PreStart a well thought out plan to promote reintegration? While the ideological underpinnings may have reflected rehabilitative and reintegrative ideals, as one key decision maker pointed out, PreStart was also implemented as a way to reduce the number of parole lay-offs, reduce the negative public reactions to a restructuring of parole, and provide some services for releasees within the community.

### **Implications for Implementation**

The timing of the restructuring of parole in terms of planning, staff morale, and available resources was unfortunate. The dash for funding necessitated an abrupt and abbreviated planning process. The changes occurred at a time when parole staff were laid-off, and although many were later rehired, staff morale sunk to an all time low. Even with the external funding made available by the Authority to fund Phase II of the program, the remaining IDOC budgetary constraints would limit the amount of staff and equipment to implement PreStart smoothly and to facilitate the inherent link between Phase I and Phase II. One administrator summarized this issue: "The biggest shortcoming associated with the program has been the time constraints. We didn't have time to work out the glitches. The first couple of months were dedicated to putting out personnel fires."

Programs that were not yet clearly defined--lacking solid program parameters--had to be implemented on a time line corresponding with the start of a new fiscal year. This hasty process of program development makes it unlikely that implementation contingencies could be identified and accommodated.

Within this context it was natural for those involved in the program, but outside of the policy making circle, to question the legitimacy of the reform. Some of the questions were quelled by the active "selling" of the program undertaken by the IDOC Director,

however, not all the internal actors were "sold." While it may never be the case that all of those involved in a program's implementation are committed to the program, PreStart seems to have been introduced into a situation characterized by considerable levels of environmental turbulence and internal staff resistance. Because of this, and the hasty move to finalize the reform embodied by PreStart, certain limitations would exist for its implementation. While necessity may again have proven to be the mother of invention in terms of Illinois' restructuring of parole, it has been noted in planning/ implementation research that credibility and legitimacy are key factors in the process of successful policy implementation. PreStart may have been the child of necessity, but it does not seem too have been conceived in a stable environment that would foster the credibility and legitimacy that would ease its implementation.



## **CHAPTER THREE: SYSTEM-WIDE ISSUES IN PRESTART'S IMPLEMENTATION AND A REVIEW OF PHASE I PROGRAMMING: UNEVEN SUCCESS IN A DIFFICULT CONTEXT**

### **Methodology and Data Collection**

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the system-wide context in which PreStart was implemented and to examine the process of PreStart's implementation in correctional facilities (Phase I programming). Although this seems to be a straightforward task, process evaluations of this type can be difficult for a number of reasons. First, the evaluation has to be done in retrospect; that is, it has to reconstruct a picture of the elements and forces which shaped the development of PreStart. Such a retrospective analysis always runs the risk of misinterpretation of events and omission of important variables.

Retrospective analyses must rely on available program documentation and the recollections of surveyed individuals. Information derived from such sources often tends to be incomplete and/or selective. Second, the dynamics influencing the implementation of a complex initiative such as PreStart are subject to many subtle influences which often are difficult not only to detect, but to separate from one another. For these reasons, multiple methods have been utilized to collect implementation data. In the attempt to provide as comprehensive and accurate a picture of PreStart's implementation as possible, both quantitative data and qualitative information-gathering procedures have been utilized.

Specifically, the strategy was to capture information that would describe three primary areas: 1) the perspectives of key actor groups, those impacting or impacted by PreStart implementation; 2) the program's content; and 3) the program's environmental context. Further, a goal was to describe the implementation of PreStart both from a overall system viewpoint and from a perspective which described the variation in implementation across various facilities. To date, the data collection regarding PreStart's implementation has focused on the following areas:

- written documentation on PreStart - policies, memorandums, curriculum, etc.
- face-to-face and telephone interviews with selected key decision-makers -- including individuals both outside the Department and within IDOC's central administration



- face-to-face interviews with PreStart implementors during site visits -- facility administrators, PreStart Coordinators, PreStart Phase I instructors, external service providers such as Employment Service Representatives, Phase II Community Service Officers, Community Drug Unit Agents, Electronic Detention Agents, SISU Agents
- group discussions with inmates who completed, or who were in the process of completing, PreStart Phase I
- a self-administered mailed questionnaire survey of all identified PreStart staff
- a self-administered questionnaire survey of selected inmates who had recently completed, or were about to complete, Phase I programming
- a self-administered mailed questionnaire survey of selected "allied" community agency personnel -- criminal justice representatives such as law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges; social service agencies, representatives from mental health agencies, Department of Children and Family Services, Employment Security; and private agencies such as Safer Foundation and the Salvation Army
- site observations by PreStart Evaluation staff, including visits to PreStart classes, site tours, and informal conversations with staff and inmates, at a sampling of correctional facilities

Despite the multiple sources of data assembled for this report, the reader is cautioned to interpret the data and analysis presented in light of the inherent limits associated with retrospective process evaluations and the particular types of data that have been collected. To minimize the potential of selective, biased, or inaccurate information being included in this report, only those observations that were consistently made by evaluation staff, either from questionnaire or interview data, are reported. For instance, quotes from individuals are presented only when they echo a theme that was heard repeatedly by evaluation staff members.

In the next section, the data collection procedures utilized to evaluate Phase I implementation are reviewed briefly. Reviews of the methodologies utilized in the collection of data regarding inmate perceptions of Phase I programming and the reactions of allied agency representatives to PreStart are provided in their respective chapters of this report.



## Staff Questionnaires

Questionnaires were mailed to relevant staff at Correctional Centers, Community Correctional Centers (CCCs) and Community Service Centers (CSCs). The individuals included in the sample were facility superintendents and supervisors (or their assistants), clinical supervisors, in-house correctional counselors, educators, parole agents, and job service personnel working with former and current PreStart enrollees. In general, an attempt was made to include everyone involved in PreStart program implementation and service delivery in the questionnaire survey. A total of 502 questionnaires were mailed in packets to staff at all IDOC facilities providing PreStart from October through November, 1992. Due to low response rates, particularly among PreStart agents, a number of follow-up efforts, including telephone calls and a post card mailing were undertaken to increase the response rate. The final response rate for the survey was 62 percent. PreStart agents responded at a slightly lower rate (53 percent) than did institutional staff (63 percent). Of the total questionnaires returned, 299 were considered useable (60 percent) and provide the basis for much of the data on staff perceptions included in this report.

Staff responding to our surveys were predominately male (59%), white (78%), college educated (45% with bachelor's degrees, 34% with master's degrees), and were in their mid-forties (mean = 43). It should be noted that over one-third of the staff responding (36%) were female and about 16% of the respondents were black.

Table 3.1 presents a brief overview of the employment characteristics of staff who responded to our questionnaire. Although the sample characteristics seem to reflect fairly well the general distribution of staff involved with PreStart, the level of potential non-response bias cannot be estimated because aggregate descriptive data on the characteristics of all PreStart service deliverers are unavailable. However, it is interesting to note the rather sizeable average length of service indicated by those returning the questionnaires. These individuals likely have seen other agency program initiatives, which suggests that they have a fairly substantial experiential base on which to ground their perceptions of PreStart. On the other hand, however, face-to-face interview data also suggested that older and more experienced correctional staff were more likely to display negative attitudes towards PreStart in particular, and policy change in general.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**STAFF EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS**

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**FACILITY TYPE**

6.4% Community Service Centers  
13.0% Community Correctional Centers  
21.7% Minimum Security Institutions  
35.5% Medium Security Institutions  
11.7% Maximum Security Institutions  
11.7% Missing\Other

**BASE OF OPERATIONS**

75.3% Institutional Illinois Department of Corrections employees  
10.0% Community Based Illinois Department of Corrections employees  
9.4% Non Illinois Department of Corrections employees  
5.4% Missing

**ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL**

66.6% Non administrative level  
18.7% Administrative level  
14.7% Missing

**IDOC EMPLOYEES-YEARS IN CORRECTIONS**

10.18 Years Average length of service  
0 - 33 Years Range of length of service

**IDOC EMPLOYEES-YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION**

3.84 Years Average length of service in present position  
0 - 25 Years Range of length of service in present position

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Another issue also raises questions as to whether the staff questionnaire data accurately reflect the views and opinions of the entire PreStart staff population. A variety of indications suggest that despite attempts to ensure the anonymity of respondents and the confidentiality of responses, some responses may have been contaminated by activities of a

few IDOC supervisory staff. A number of returned questionnaires contained messages that the individual's supervisor attempted to review the respondent's questionnaire before it was returned to the evaluation team. A number of anonymous phone calls and subsequent staff interviews further suggested that this did occur at least on occasion. It is difficult to ascertain how widespread this phenomenon was, and how it affected response patterns. It is the assumption of the evaluation team that these incidents were relatively few in nature, and that they tended to result in less critical perceptions being reported by some staff than were actually held. Thus, the potential response bias associated with veteran IDOC staff disproportionately responding to the survey effort (which would tend to be in a negative direction) may have been offset by contamination generated by attempts to review and/or censor responses by certain supervisory staff (which would tend to be in a positive direction). These potential sources of bias will be the subject of further exploration in subsequent reports but do suggest that the survey data should be interpreted with some caution, and that only the most obvious patterns of responses should be given significant emphasis.

### **Institutional Visits**

A total of fourteen correctional facilities were visited (facilities in close proximity to SIUC on more than one occasion). The visits lasted on average two days, except for Community Correctional Centers where visits lasted on average one day. At each facility, observations of PreStart instruction were made when classes were in session. Correctional staff involved in the delivery of PreStart services were interviewed, and inmates meeting the eligibility criteria were surveyed (including written questionnaire and oral interviews).

While on site at each facility, relevant correctional staff were the subjects of one-half hour to one and one-half hour face-to-face interviews. At each facility the evaluation team sought to interview the Assistant Warden for Programs, the PreStart Coordinator, the local Job Service representative, the assigned Community PreStart Agent III, and a sampling of PreStart module presenters. In addition, the evaluators often had a debriefing with the facility Warden at the end of the visit. While some variation occurred across facilities with regards to making contact with all of these individuals, in general it was determined that these efforts were very successful. Ninety-nine formal interviews across 14 facilities were conducted (this

averages to over six interviews per facility visited).

### **System-Wide Implementation Issues and Findings**

The success or failure of a program initiative such as PreStart, which requires major changes in organizational philosophy and operational processes, is dependent upon many factors. In this report some of the factors impacting the implementation of inter-governmental policy as identified by Van Horn and Van Meter (1977) are adapted as focus areas for the discussion of the PreStart implementation process. Among the more prominent of these factors are those external to the implementing agency such as the political, economic, and social environment; characteristics of the reform itself including the program standards to be implemented; and characteristics of the implementing agency and the processes utilized in implementation such as compliance mechanisms, internal communication processes, the dispositions of the policy implementors, and the general capacity of the agency to implement the reform. The following discussion of these factors relates to general themes that are related to the implementation of both Phase I and Phase II programming.

#### **The Social, Political, and Economic Environment**

A major consideration of the external climate (i.e., the political environment as well as relevant social and economic conditions) centers on how the internal agency implementation environment is impacted by these forces. Three major external influences seemed to have had a predominant influence on PreStart implementation:

- 1) A dissatisfaction with the extant parole system and a desire to reduce the number of individuals being returned to prison as "parole violators";
- 2) A lack of State resources to expand or enhance significantly the existing parole structure; and
- 3) The timing of budget cuts, and the related desire to implement PreStart in a timely manner that reduced the negative political and social consequences of the change, resulted in a hasty program development and implementation process.

These three external influences initially combined to force a rapid and radical change from the existing parole system. One of the resulting impacts of this rapid transition from the

previous parole system to PreStart was the massive layoff of parole agents and the subsequent rehiring of some senior officers in newly defined roles (i.e., PreStart agents). The problems caused by this layoff/rehiring procedure went far beyond the primary logistics of the event; more significantly, they created negative attitudes and expectations which were displayed throughout the PreStart implementation process by certain staff (particularly those identified with the Phase II component). This made the transition from a more highly structured, control oriented, parole supervision philosophy to a more flexible assistance/community services approach problematic.

This situation was commonly described by many respondents, as is reflected in the following illustrative statement:

After rehiring of parole agents, there was a short training program. Training was and remains lacking. Many of the agents are older and not oriented to PreStart. Many have taken advantage of (the) State's early retirement plan, others have been reassigned to (the) Electronic Monitoring program. Parole agents are union employees--currently they want more input into policy decisions, but (I'm) unsure if any suits have been filed. Agents are really angry. . .

Comments made during one of the institutional site visits by a parole agent who had been laid off and then rehired reflects some of the personal and family-related costs generated by the reform:

I had been a Parole agent for \_\_\_\_ years (deleted to protect identity) . . . when I was let go. Since I had some seniority I was rehired but the choice was that if I wanted to work again, I had to relocate to another part of the State. I had to get an apartment and leave my wife and children here . . . I was only able to get a transfer back recently . . .

To the interviewer's question, "Were you upset by the way it was handled," the agent replied, "Wouldn't you be?" This respondent's situation, while not typical, does indicate the upheaval caused in some lives by the layoff and rehiring process, and the lingering negativity that it has caused among many staff members.

A second impact stemming from the external requirements for a rapid implementation and a lack of resources targeted for the PreStart Program was a lack of infrastructure to support the Program's implementation. The absence of this supporting framework was



especially evident during the early implementation period, as reflected by a lack of clear administrative direction, minimal training or staff preparation, and lack of funding for necessary program resources. These issues will be explored within the Internal Conditions discussion below. Unfortunately, since the Department had little control over the necessity to implement the program in such a hasty fashion, it was likely only due to the strong support given to PreStart by IDOC's top administrators that the program survived these initial birthing pangs.

## **Internal Conditions**

### *Characteristics of the Implementing Agency*

The attributes of the organization responsible for implementation affect its ability to carry out the policy's standards. For instance, the experience and the competence of the staff to perform the tasks required of them, regardless of staff orientation to the policy, will affect implementation. Likewise, the organizational subunits primarily responsible for implementation must have sufficient financial and political support to translate the policy into action.

The responsibility for PreStart's implementation was diffuse within IDOC. Phase II programming was the domain of the Community Services Division of IDOC but the implementation of Phase I programming was a shared responsibility between adult institutions and the Community Services Division, which was basically assigned the duty of also administering and monitoring Phase I programming across all IDOC adult facilities. At the point of PreStart's implementation, the Community Services Division was being headed by a recently hired Deputy Director who had not been involved in the initial development of the program. The Division was also witnessing terribly low morale among many staff due to past and impending personnel layoffs. Additionally, the Division in fulfilling its mandate to oversee the implementation of Phase I programming had to create linkages with adult institutional staff that were not firmly in place -- the Division had little prior routine and formal contact with adult institutional staff. Its ability to enforce standards in the institutional setting was reliant on the goodwill and commitment of facility administrators; the Community Services Division in the past did not have the internal political power within

IDOC to be a major actor in determining or shaping major agency priorities or practices. Finally, the number of staff within the Community Services Division available to design, implement, and monitor PreStart programming activities was very limited. This was the basic situation in which IDOC attempted to implement the policy standards contained in PreStart.

### *Standards*

Policy or program standards move beyond general goal statements and establish requirements, in varying degrees of specificity, for how those goals shall be implemented. Standards typically center on policy, procedures, and directives in written form. Policy standards also provide overseers with the tools of enforcement, since they determine what behaviors are tolerable and what sanctions can be imposed for non-compliance. It is commonly assumed that consistency of program delivery hinges on the development of clear, unambiguous and useable guidelines.

Because PreStart was developed rather hastily, IDOC did not have a fully developed and refined package of program standards to direct PreStart's initial implementation. Some standards were fairly specific, but many were not. This appeared to be a conscious and deliberate policy choice made by key IDOC officials. It was realized early on that enough time had not been available to think through all possible program contingencies and to develop a program model that was acceptable in all of its components. The Department decided to take, for the most part, an "adaptive" rather than a "programmed" implementation approach (see Berman, 1980).

Programmed implementation approaches seek specificity on program standards before implementation is introduced. Officials using a programmed approach formulate specific, detailed, and presumably consistent objectives to be followed by lower-level personnel in routinized ways circumscribed by standard operating procedures. In contrast, the ideal of adaptive implementation is the establishment of a process that allows policy to be modified, specified, and revised according to the unfolding interaction of the policy with its institutional setting (Berman, 1980: 210-211). A review of PreStart's program standards and discussions with key decision makers indicates that an adaptive or evolutionary process was utilized. It really could be no other way, and what to the unwary observer may have looked more like a



disorderly learning process than a predictable procedure, was a process demanded by the timing of implementation and a process consistent with the environmental situation at hand.

For instance, in initial communication with PreStart staff about the goals and standards associated with Phase I programming, IDOC officials presented the program as being experimental and one which had to be massaged, modified, and reworked as time progressed to make its implementation smoother and its impact more relevant to the client population. Staff feedback was allowed and encouraged at that time. However, it appears that many staff did not view the program in this light and did not fully internalize the message. Perhaps accustomed to highly specified administrative directives, many staff viewed initial program standards as being overly ambiguous and initial implementation processes as being chaotic. This is illustrated in the following discussion of standards introduced very early during PreStart's implementation and the initial PreStart instructional curriculum.

Policy, Procedure and Directives: The initial IDOC Administrative Directive(s) relating to PreStart was issued on the date of its formal implementation (July 1, 1991) and identified the two components of PreStart--the Phase I or Institutional Component, and the Phase II or Community Services Component. The Phase I component was envisioned to consist of two parts: intensified pre-release programming (Release School) which would be required for all inmates within six months of their release, and the establishment of an Individual Development Plan. An explanatory memo from the Deputy Director for Community Services, dated 7/19/91, stipulated that the inmates in Phase I would participate in a 30-hour release school and that the program was designed to enhance job skills and self-esteem, identify post release needs, and provide strategies to assist in the inmate's return to the community. The memo also specifically mentioned an Individual Development Plan which was to identify "practical, attainable goals for release."

Compliance with the directives was sought to be achieved in two ways. First, a strong message was given to institutional administrations that PreStart was a "priority" program and had the full support and commitment of the IDOC Director and the Department's top level administration. Second, a set curriculum was imposed for the classroom, and a schedule for its presentation was dictated and rigidly mandated (i.e., two weeks of classes, one module per day, a particular module on each day, and three hours of instruction per module). This

rigid schedule was explicitly imposed to allow for Central Office monitoring of the program's implementation across facilities. Thus, at least in this one instance, a "programmed" strategy was adopted. The Individual Development Plan, seen as a centerpiece of the program's prerelease planning objective, was to be completed during the Release School.

Curriculum Development: Because Phase I of the PreStart program is accomplished primarily as a classroom activity, the curriculum becomes an important standard in establishing quality and uniformity of program delivery. Staff interview data suggested overwhelming dissatisfaction with the PreStart curriculum as it was *initially* implemented. Staff criticism seemed to focus on three areas:

- a belief that the IDOC had inappropriately paid an individual a handsome fee to develop the curriculum when there were staff in the Department with experience who could have designed a much more appropriate program.
- a belief that the curriculum was directed at an educational level beyond most inmates and that much of the material was targeted at areas not germane to inmates' release needs, while it ignored other critical areas.
- a belief that the curriculum was disjointed and unconnected. In the words of one educator, it wasn't a curriculum, "just a hodge-podge of study and lecture material."

Staff dissatisfaction with the curriculum's content was compounded by the staff's perception of the rigidity of the Administration regarding the execution of the PreStart classes. As mentioned above, for example, initial time frames for sessions (modules) were three hours long, and as one instructor indicated, "We show videos (e.g., motivation tapes) because there's no way we can stretch out the material for three hours, and if you just ask the inmates to sit there without anything to do, you've got problems."

Thus, contradictory forces relating to program standards appeared to be factors in the implementation of the Phase I instructional program. On one hand, the instructional staff soon realized the need for modification of the curriculum to address the specific needs of the IDOC population. While Central Office realized this would be the case and encouraged feedback, this message appeared to have fallen on somewhat deaf ears. On the other hand, the administration, apparently in an effort to ensure uniformity in instructional delivery,

issued strict guidelines regarding how the program was to be delivered. Thus, content guidelines were left open, but guidelines for the timing and structure of instruction were highly specified. The latter seemed to overpower the former.

To give appropriate credit to the Department's central administration, the revision of the PreStart curriculum was a continuous process. Even before the extent of the staff's dissatisfaction with the curriculum and format of the Phase I instruction became widely known, steps were taken to establish a statewide committee to examine the curriculum and to develop alternatives. This committee was organized the winter following PreStart's July 1st introduction in 1991. It met in March and finalized the new curriculum. In April 1992, the instructors were trained in the new material. The Assistant Wardens met in early June, resulting in more revisions to the curriculum. The revised curriculum was finally printed in July 1992, one year after the PreStart program had been introduced. This timing was consistent with an original promise made by the Administration that a new curriculum would be introduced within one year of PreStart's start-up date.

The revised curriculum allows individual instructors much leeway in developing their own module materials, and instructor creativity and adaptation is encouraged. Much of the "creative effort" of the curriculum committee seems to have been based upon input of PreStart instructional staff. In the institutions having "special" inmate populations for which the original curriculum was particularly inappropriate, this was even more apparent. For example, instructional staff at one facility serving a special population had taken initiative to begin adapting the curriculum to their population before the official curriculum revision occurred. Despite the fact that Central Office explicitly supported the revision, some of the involved instructors expressed fear of being reprimanded because of their activity. Clearly, it appears that confused messages were being communicated and that the Department's acceptance of an "adaptive" implementation process with regard to program standards was not viewed as being the case among a significant number of correctional employees charged with PreStart's implementation.

### *Resources*

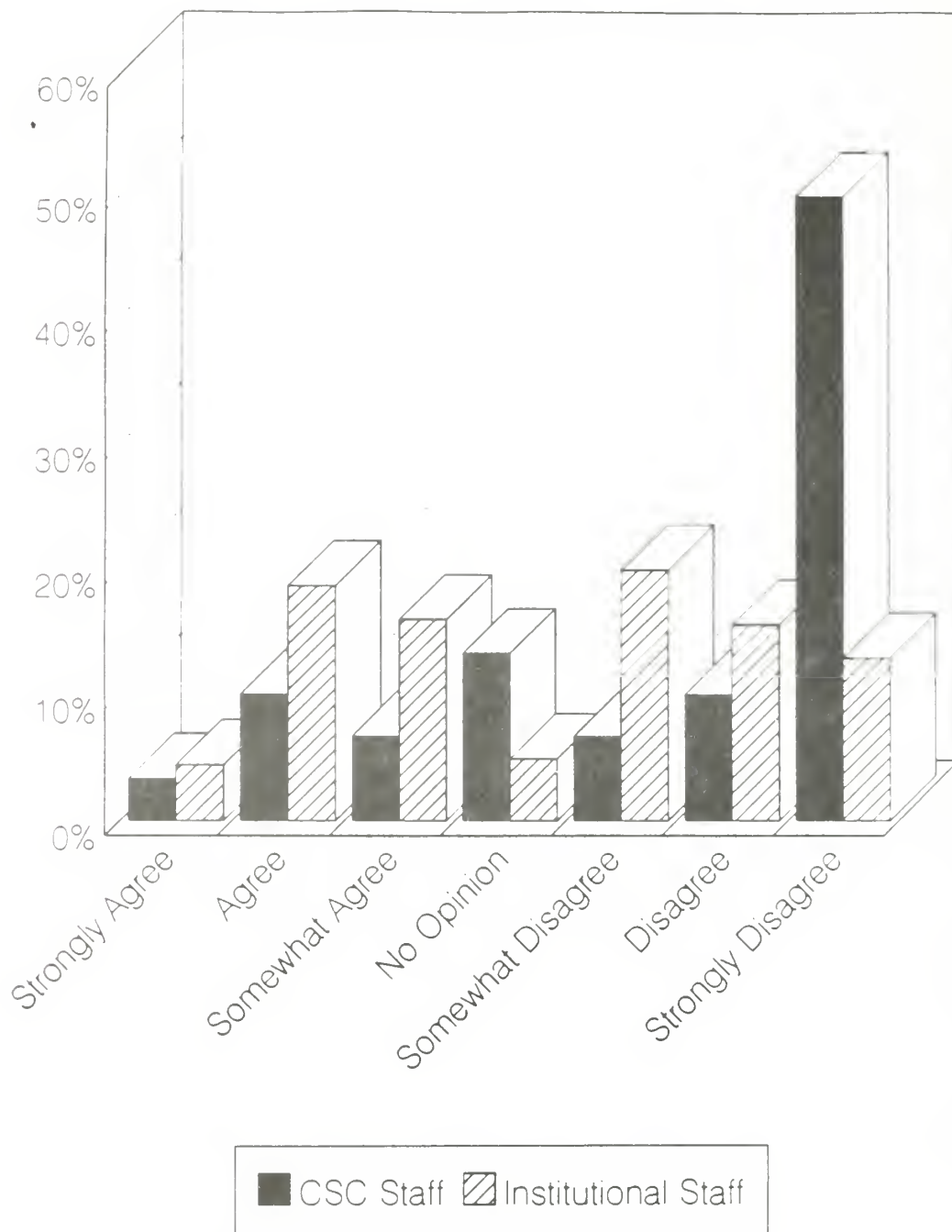
A major component of the policy decision influential in the implementation process is

the level of financial and other resources allocated for program administration. Inadequate funds and incentives are an often cited cause of implementation failure. Resource levels can affect many aspects of implementation. For instance, agencies that are faced with budgetary cutbacks will perceive and carry out their tasks differently from those enjoying expanding budgets. In regard to both of the above, the implementation of PreStart occurred in a situation lacking necessary existing resources to accomplish tasks effectively. Additional resources were not provided by the policy to aid in the development of programs that were clearly more expansive in scope than what had existed earlier (i.e., Phase I programming). Finally, the fiscal context was one that was quite demoralizing to program staff, especially those involved in the delivery of Phase II services.

Staff: The IDOC had just undergone a loss of resources when PreStart was implemented. Half of its parole supervisor positions were eliminated and no additional positions or monies were available to assist in the implementation of Phase I of the PreStart program (Phase II was being funded through the Authority grant money). Consequently, staff in the institutions who were assigned supervision responsibilities and the teaching of PreStart modules often felt they were shouldering additional duties without additional resources: No reduction in their regular duties occurred, nor was there any increase of personnel to help implement the program. This was despite Central Office attempts to communicate to staff that PreStart was introduced not as an additional duty but as a reorganization of how they do some of their work. For instance, it was suggested to correctional counselors that some of their counseling could be done in the classrooms and that by so doing a more efficient use of staff time could result.

Nonetheless, PreStart staff held the common perception that there was a lack of staff to properly implement the program, a view particularly common among the community services staff as seen in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**  
**Staff Responses To The Question: Are There Sufficient Staff to Implement PreStart?**





Only slightly more institutional staff disagreed than agreed with the statement that there were sufficient staff to implement PreStart. This is understandable given the relatively large pool of personnel available to staff PreStart in institutions. This is not the case at Community Service Centers and suggests why the vast majority of CSC staff disagreed with the statement. This perception, however valid it may or may not be given local resource levels, creates an atmosphere of perceived competition for scarce resources across organizational subunits responsible for the implementation of PreStart. A statement made by a PreStart Coordinator in a medium security facility illustrates the perceived competition for resources between PreStart program components.

When PreStart was first implemented, a parole agent came in periodically, but concern among the staff was expressed over the irregularity of his visits. Since then a different parole agent has been assigned to the institution. However, many parole agents are being pulled from the institutions to work on electronic detention, or traveling to community service centers so even more of a burden for Phase I is being placed on the institutional staff.

In fact, due to the lack of staff available to operate the CSCs, as part of the revised PreStart curriculum, staff who were in the past responsible for delivering the Orientation module were now being relieved of that duty to free more of their time to service the CSCs.

The mandate that institutional staff be primarily responsible for the delivery of PreStart instruction appears to have resulted in staffing deficits in other areas at particular facilities.

As one institutional administrator indicated:

Being forced to do more than one thing (teaching PreStart too) has been a problem; it causes conflict with a staffer's primary job and produces stress. Priority given PreStart by the Central Office means that in a conflict with the primary job, PreStart wins out.

Staff "poor" institutions frequently suffered the most impact since the implementation of PreStart School essentially required similar levels of staff presence regardless of institution size or staffing level. However, the impact of the resource shortfalls seemed to vary considerably depending on the willingness of the institution administration to redirect resources. A PreStart administrator in one facility commented:



The Warden feels that services can be delivered adequately with existing resources if they are utilized more optimally. Some staff feel inadequate staff levels and resources renders this impossible, with job strains resulting.

Yet in another institution, staff felt that the administration had adjusted to the priority of PreStart and was willing to take necessary steps to provide resources:

PreStart is a priority of the Central Office, and the Warden made it very clear that PreStart is to be successful in the facility. He has supported staff's requests for needed resources.

While some facilities used reallocation strategies to meet PreStart resource demands, others sought ways to expand resource availability. One method that was used by several sites was to enlist the aid of volunteers. For example, in one Community Correctional Center nearly the entire Phase I program was being delivered through the use of volunteers:

A volunteer intern from a local university was asked and consented to teach four modules. Along with a correctional counselor who is the formal PreStart Coordinator, they have provided the bulk of PreStart.

Other sites went outside the normal counselor, educator, chaplain personnel to staff PreStart modules, utilizing institutional correctional officers and medical staff who volunteered. Currently, however, correctional officers are not formally involved in PreStart instruction because of concern regarding potential role conflicts. Others enlisted the aid of other public and private agency personnel in the delivery of specific modules. Particularly noted was the use of the Secretary of State's Office (driver's licenses), the Employment Service (job related modules), local health/mental health agencies, and private foundations such as Safer Foundation and Progressions.

Some of the public and private agency personnel involved in the delivery of PreStart services are there as a result of interagency agreements that predate PreStart and have been executed by the Central Office.

Training: Beyond having the number of staff necessary to effectively implement a policy reform, implementing organizations must have staff that are competent to effect the reform. A primary way to do so is to train staff assigned the responsibility of implementation. As training relates to Phase I programming, IDOC had no real plans for

training classroom presenters until January of 1992. Initially, orientations were provided staff to inform them of PreStart and what was generally expected, but a formal training component was not in place. Despite the presence of a Training Unit within IDOC, the Training Unit was not involved in developing a training program for instructors during PreStart's planning stages, and its involvement in staff training has been generally limited to the provision of "platform skills" to PreStart presenters. All presenters are currently required to participate in a two day platform skills program. Between January of 1992 and July of 1992, 25 programs were administered to a total of 548 presenters.

Consistent with the above, when staff were asked if they received PreStart training before their involvement in PreStart, 56 percent of the 225 individuals responding to the question indicated that they had not. Surprisingly, given the mandated nature of current platform skills training, 52 percent of the respondents indicated that they had not received any specialized PreStart in-service training since their involvement in PreStart. Respondents were also asked to respond to the statement, "Overall, I received the kind of training that I need to perform my job (PreStart) well" on a scale of choices that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. While 36 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, 43 percent disagreed with the statement. Unexpectedly, given the lack of formal training provided CSC staff by IDOC's Training Unit, little difference was exhibited in responses across CSC and institutional staff.

These data suggest that IDOC had not provided PreStart training to the majority of PreStart staff before they assumed their responsibilities and that subsequent attempts have been taken to provide Phase I staff with some classroom skills. Nonetheless, a large percentage of staff feel that the training that has been delivered has not been adequate to allow them to do their jobs well.

Materials and Physical Plants: Inadequate resources in terms of materials and adequate classroom space hindered initial implementation at many facilities. Because no additional funds were provided by IDOC, all the initial materials for PreStart (manuals, pencils, & equipment) were supplied by funds from the existing institutional budgets. There is still a lack of equipment such as film projectors, TV's and VCR's, and additional classrooms that some staff feel would enhance the effectiveness of the classes.

Additionally, needed teaching materials such as written exercises or overhead projections to illustrate module concepts, were lacking in the original curriculum. Given the immediacy with which the program was implemented, many facilities were not prepared with appropriate duplicating services, audio-visual equipment set-ups, classroom space assignments, or even inmate transfer routines, and lack in one or more of these areas continued to persist well into the time period during which site visits were conducted (a year after the program start up).

### **Communication and Staff Involvement in Planning**

Frequently a gulf exists between decision makers responsible for creating a new policy and line employees ultimately responsible for its implementation. For various reasons, including morale and goal clarification, organizations seem to achieve optimum performance when all levels of the organization have input regarding the general process of change. The means by which the nature of an impending change is communicated between various levels of an agency can dramatically affect staff attitudes towards the implementation of the change, ultimately affecting other aspects of program/policy implementation.

Staff at the institutions were officially notified about the PreStart program when the wardens received a July 19, 1991 memorandum from the Central Office mandating its implementation. Most wardens had meetings with their senior staff to present the program's requirements. Educators and counselors selected by the institutional administrators to be facilitators were then sent internal memos informing them of their new duties with the PreStart program. For many of these newly designated facilitators, it was the first they had heard about the PreStart program. The rumors antecedent to formal introduction of the program presented PreStart as a replacement for the former parole system that could no longer effectively operate due to the severe cuts in parole staff.

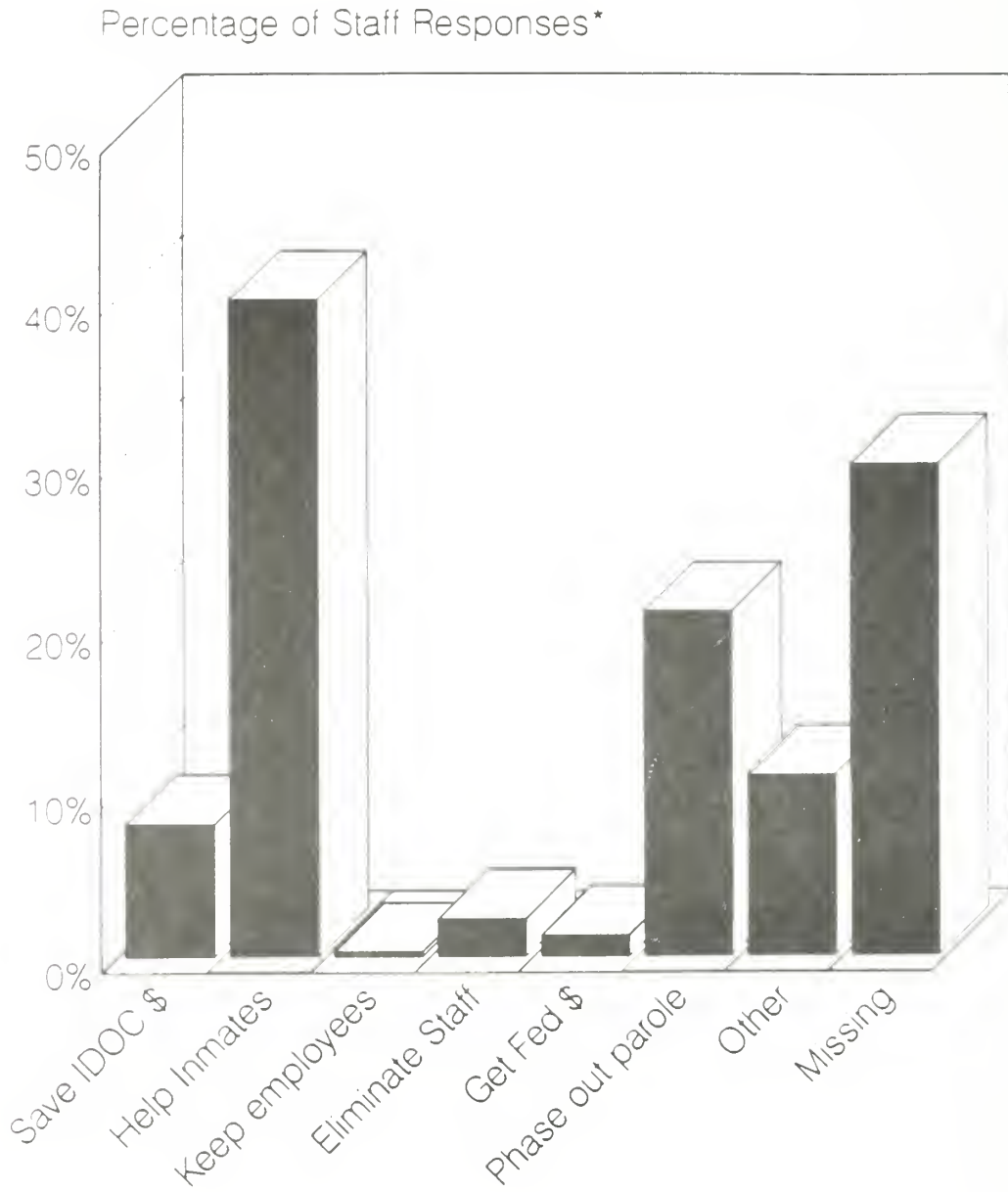
One area of focus for the evaluation team during site visits was an assessment of how the goals of PreStart were communicated to program staff. Inadequate goal communication can lead to low morale and/or inadequate compliance. Insufficient compliance would result, for instance, if various sites/facilities enacted the "letter of the law" without understanding the corresponding "spirit." For example, as previously mentioned, staff members at a

number of facilities commented on holding three hour PreStart classes without having sufficient material to fill the time. The result was that staff sometimes mechanically went through the motions of presenting the required curricular material in a manner primarily designed to fill the time rather than to present materials in an engaging and effective way. The means of the policy transplaced the goals of the policy, perhaps partially because the goals of the policy were not thoroughly communicated or internalized.

Another important area of communication centers on providing staff with the basic rationale for the change. If the basic purpose for change is explained to the staff responsible for implementing the change, they will be more likely to view the change as necessary, rather than just the whim of the administration. In this vein, PreStart staff were surveyed as to whether or not a rationale for the change from the previous parole system to PreStart programming had been given. The follow-up to this question was an open-ended question asking what type of rationale had been given to the employee. The results of these questions can be found in Figure 3.2. While a plurality of the staff indicated that helping inmates was a goal of the program, many respondents offered financial, employment, and public relations themes as serving the basis for PreStart's implementation. The variability of responses indicate that the rationale for change may not have been adequately communicated.

**Figure 3.2**  
**Rationale Given To Staff System-Wide Responses (CSC Staff)**

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\*Note Respondents may give more than one rationale



**TABLE 3.2**  
**NON-ADMINISTRATIVE/ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF**  
**INVOLVEMENT IN PRESTART PLANNING**

Non-Administrative  
(n=199)

Administrative  
(n=56)

	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
<b>I contributed to PreStart planning</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Line staff had little to say about PreStart</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Things would be better if there was line input before PreStart</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>I feel good about PreStart because I contributed to planning</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>35%</b>

*\*Note: Only Agree/Disagree Categories Included*

Staff were also asked about the extent to which they were involved in the decisions to develop and implement PreStart. The majority of respondents indicated that they were not involved in the decisions related to the implementation of Prestart to the extent that they would have preferred. Table 3.2 clearly shows this attitude on the part of the staff and highlights the fact that line staff felt much more excluded from the process than did administrators.

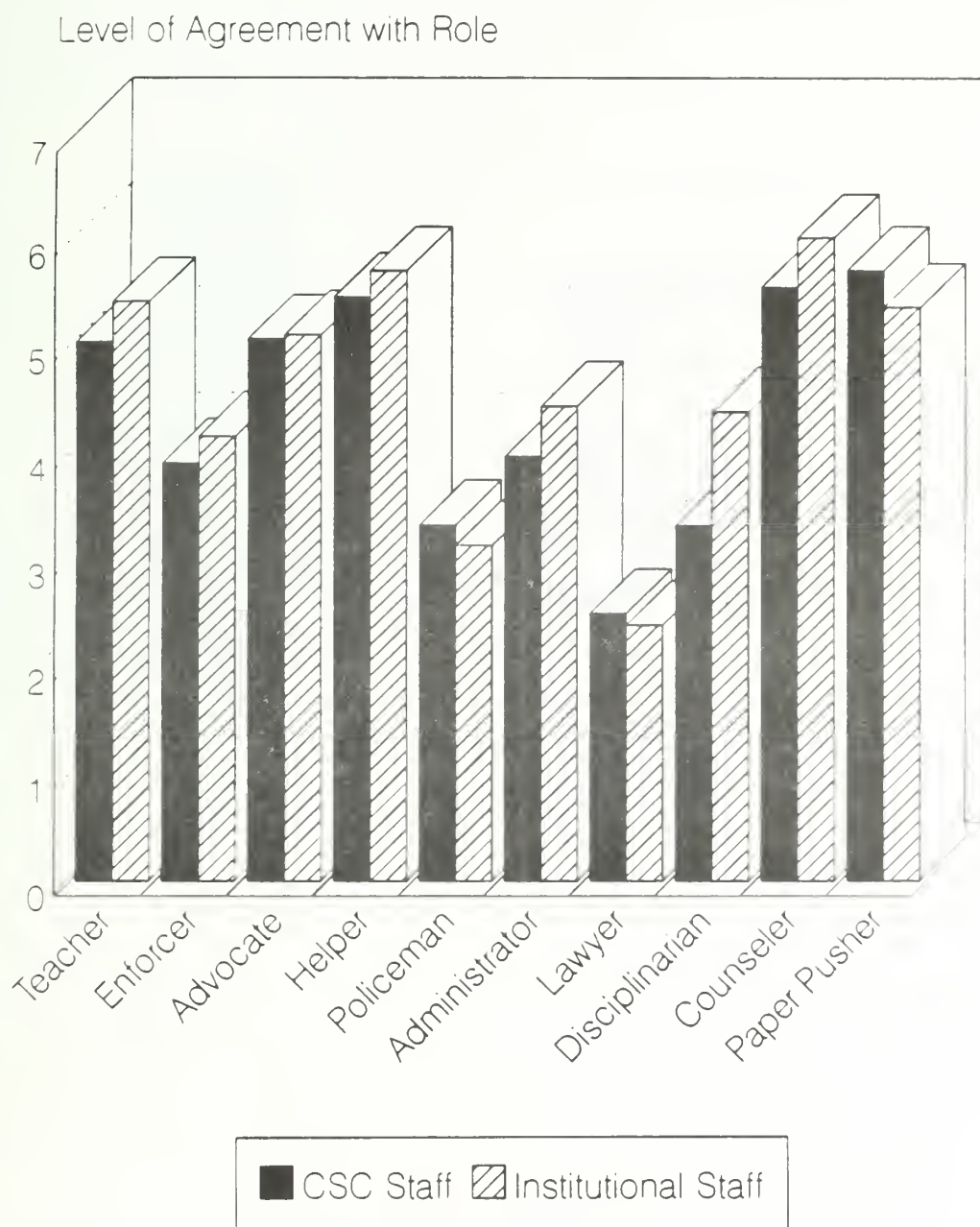
Ineffective initial communications regarding a policy change and a lack of rank and file involvement in original planning processes are often thought to lead to skewed perceptions of organizational realities and staff disaffection toward change. These in turn can lead to reductions in morale as well as unrealistic goal setting and decision-making. These concerns and sentiments were heard consistently during the course of staff interviews. Many individuals throughout the organizational hierarchy complained about hearing rumors or news leaks before being officially informed about the impending implementation of PreStart. This created resentment and anger towards IDOC because PreStart was perceived as a political ploy rather than a serious reform effort.



## **Disposition of Implementors**

Staff Role Perceptions: Clearly, one of the most important factors in program implementation is the attitude of the staff, that is, whether they are favorably or unfavorably disposed toward the program. Correctional role orientations are potentially strong determinants of how individuals assigned the task of delivering PreStart services respond to the challenge. One of the question areas on the staff questionnaire asked respondents to indicate how strongly they identified with a variety of roles. This was to determine if the staff identified more with roles associated with control and supervision, or more with helping and counseling type roles. As seen in Figure 3.3, IDOC staff seem to see themselves more in helping roles such as teacher, advocate, helper, counselor, rather than control oriented roles such as enforcer, policeman, or disciplinarian.

**Figure 3.3**  
**Staff Perceptions of Their Role**



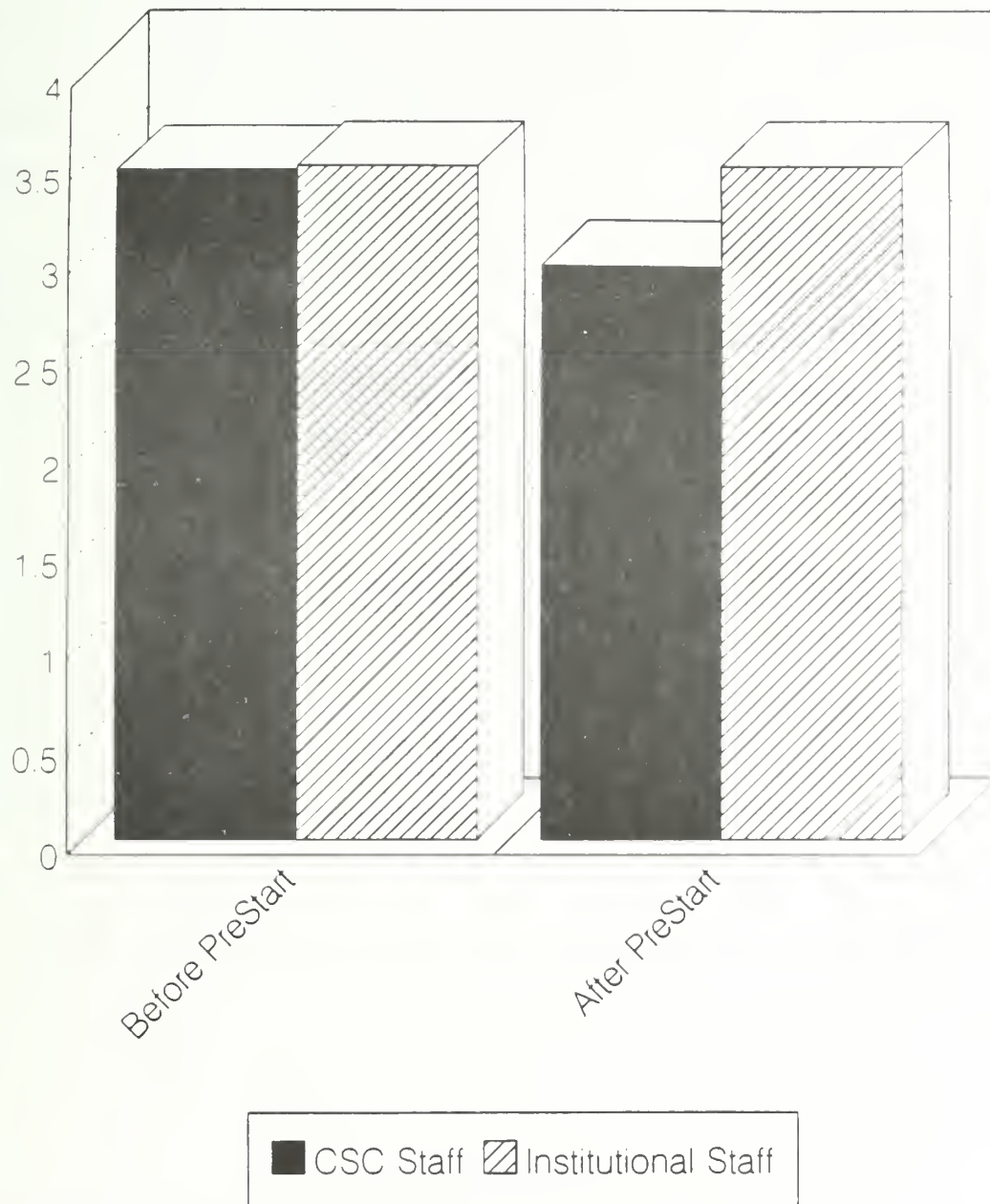
1 = strongly disagree / 4 = neutral / 7 = strongly agree

Perhaps even more interesting is the remarkable similarity between the institutional staff and the CSC staff in a number of the role identity areas. The only significant difference between institutional and Community Service Center staff appears to be in the role of disciplinarian, a role with which the institutional staff identified more strongly. Since the primary purpose of PreStart is to help inmates overcome problems associated with successful reintegration into the community, these results should be considered quite positive, as the orientation of most staff would seem to favor assistance as opposed to control.

Perceptions of Job Security: One of the major factors associated with PreStart implementation was the parole agent lay-offs right before PreStart was implemented, with the subsequent rehiring of some as Phase II PreStart agents. Questionnaire responses from Community Service Center staff revealed negative feelings on this issue. Figure 3.4 indicates that levels of job satisfaction decreased among CSC staff after the implementation of PreStart. Job satisfaction levels remained stable for institutional staff. Data (not presented in tabular form) indicate that over a year into the PreStart program, about 63 percent of the Community Service Center staff were "extremely dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" with their perceived job security. Conversely, just under 75 percent of the institutional staff responded that they were "extremely satisfied" with their job security.

**Figure 3.4**  
**Staff Perceptions of Job Satisfaction Before and After PreStart**

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1 = not satisfied / 4 = very satisfied

The preceding discussion illustrates the less than ideal organizational context in which PreStart was implemented. The key variables often associated with policy implementation success--i.e., a supportive political and social environment, adequate resources, favorable dispositions among implementors, clear policy standards, strong communication patterns, and an organization suited for rapid absorption of change--were lacking.

• Despite these negative implementation characteristics, IDOC high level administrators exhibited a strong commitment to the reform effort and were willing to engage in necessary adaptive planning strategies to see the essential elements of the designed program implemented. This was particularly the case in Phase I institutional programming which could capitalize on a large existing staff. Further, the nature of change represented by Phase I PreStart programming was much less a radical departure from existing operations than was the case with Phase II programming. In the next section, patterns of Phase I implementation are examined.

### **Key Factors Affecting Implementation Success In Phase I Programming**

Site visits revealed a considerable amount of variation in the degree to which Phase I programming was successfully implemented across facilities. A few facilities exhibited programs characterized by low staff morale and commitment levels, a highly disaffected inmate clientele, and weak internal communication and service delivery structures. On the other hand, a majority of the programs reviewed were delivering instructional services in what appeared to be an effective manner by staff who felt positively about the program. A few programs were doing an exceptional job, with PreStart appearing to revitalize particular staff and facility operations in a manner consistent with humanistic and therapeutic approaches to correctional interventions.

Several influential factors were associated with the varying degrees of implementation success across institutional facilities. The following discussion identifies and discusses some of these factors.

## Administrative Leadership

The key factor in determining implementation success appears to be the administrative leadership exerted in the process of implementing PreStart. At institutions where administrative personnel such as the Warden or an Assistant Warden were present during classroom sessions, PreStart staff meetings, and inmate graduations, and openly expressed support and acceptance of the program and its goals, inmates and staff were more accepting of the program and more cooperative in its implementation.

The presence of top level administration at PreStart functions varied greatly across facilities and was reflective of a number of factors. Wardens and Assistant Wardens clearly understood that PreStart was a departmental priority, therefore, most tended to strongly support PreStart. A number of respondents characterized PreStart as being "the Director's baby." Under the leadership of the Director during most of the 1980s, performance on institutional audits largely determined one's promotion within the agency. To many, PreStart had replaced audits in the new administration. Top level officials who behaved in a manner consistent with the departmental priority given PreStart tended to be younger and more ambitious than those not who did not.

Departmental ambitions alone were not enough in determining the commitment of institutional leaders to PreStart. Officials who were perceived by staff and inmates as being aligned with PreStart's philosophy of behavioral change were those most likely to be seen in classrooms, at graduation ceremonies, and conducting PreStart staff meetings.

This difference, while difficult to detect in an objective fashion, was evidenced through the administration's actions in assigning staff members to PreStart functions. For example in one institution, the Warden had delegated PreStart responsibilities to an Assistant Warden, who had in turn delegated the responsibilities to a Clinical Services Supervisor, who subsequently carried the title "PreStart Coordinator." At this institution, however, one of the educators was the *de facto* coordinator. This person had a strong personal belief in the value of PreStart and was willing to take on extra responsibility to ensure that it ran smoothly.

In marked contrast, the Warden at another facility attended each PreStart graduation ceremony. Outside speakers were part of the formal ceremony. At this institution, the administrative attitude towards PreStart was echoed by inmates who indicated they had



framed their graduation certificates.

Perhaps the most tangible way in which top level institutional support for PreStart was manifested was through the selection of individuals assigned PreStart duties. In some facilities those staff members who were viewed by their superiors "as having little to do" and incompetent in their current assignments were assigned PreStart duties. In other facilities it was apparent that care had been given to selecting the most committed and competent staff for PreStart administrative and/or presenter roles. For instance, in one facility where PreStart implementation was lacking early on in the process, the Warden subsequently appointed a dynamic and charismatic staff member as PreStart Coordinator. It was apparent that the facility's program turned around quite rapidly because of her impressive abilities to generate enthusiasm for the program among both staff and inmates.

It is important to note that security level, the objective level of resources within the facility, and the composition of the inmate population were not major constraints in patterns of administrative support for PreStart.

### **Staff Commitment**

Without the support and commitment of the administration it would be difficult for staff to exhibit high levels of commitment to PreStart. A pattern of staff disaffection emerged where administrative support of PreStart was low, and in all likelihood was reflective of staff assignment patterns. In one facility PreStart presenters expressed strong hostility to the program. In this facility, inmates reported that the presenters had openly called the program worthless and stated in class that they did not want to be there any more than did the inmates. The instructional style of these presenters reflected their negative attitudes towards PreStart programming. Reportedly, they either showed non-relevant videos or tapes instead of teaching the modules, or read the curriculum verbatim from the manual. Again, younger staff who took a fresh approach to their responsibilities seemed much more responsive to implementing the PreStart program. This may have been a function of length of service and staff burnout in older staff.

### *Back-up Facilitators/Staff Rotation*

A strategy which seemed to be an effective remedy to the problem of scarce staff resources and presenter burn-out was team teaching and the rotation of staff presenters. Through the experience of presenting different modules, staff at some facilities have developed the capacity to step in as temporary replacements for primary facilitators, providing relief and support to those primarily required to deliver particular modules. This innovation appears to have been developed in the more successful PreStart programs first, and then disseminated to other institutions through meetings of PreStart Coordinators. Staff rotation was most likely to be implemented in larger facilities having a pool of committed staff from which PreStart presenters could be selected. At one facility in which rotation and team teaching were not utilized, one staff person stated that "the PreStart presenters were looking for a cliff." It is noteworthy that this facility had a very supportive leadership and a very committed staff. However, one year of delivering PreStart without any relief when other job responsibilities were also increasing was beginning to take its toll. Thus, a minimal level of staff resources is necessary for a high quality program to endure. Fortunately, this negative situation was witnessed at only one facility.

### **Communication Patterns**

Institutions having extensive formal and informal communication among PreStart staff witnessed the emergence of stronger Phase I programming. For instance at one facility, staff consistently spoke of sharing information and ideas in hallways, on the grounds, prior to or after module presentations, as well as at the formalized PreStart staff meetings. When regular staff meetings among PreStart presenters were held, and the meetings were actually utilized to share information and insights regarding PreStart, a more vital and committed PreStart staff seemed to be in place. At a number of institutions, meetings were not commonly held and staff members did not sit in on module presentation delivered by co-workers. Communication was often lacking between educational and counseling staff. Open communication channels nurtured by the administration often generated feelings of team effort and commitment.

Where little feedback took place among the staff, there seemed to be little knowledge

among presenters of material in other modules, and there was little sharing of successful presentation techniques or discussion of common problems. In the facilities where program implementation was least successful, instead of hearing about cooperation among PreStart presenters, reports of resentment expressed by one group against another were articulated:

- The staff is divided as to Prestart. Educators find it easy. Counselors were thrust into it and find it difficult to address groups of 35 or 40. Educators try to impose their learning skills onto counselor presenters, who had no training or exposure.

Institutions that elicited inmate feedback on the program followed by attention to their criticisms and comments, also witnessed more positive attitudes from inmates. By contrast, most institutions visited did not have a process by which inmates could express their views and concerns about what was being presented in the classroom.

### **Individual Development Plans (IDPs)**

The IDP is a key program element within PreStart. Development of the IDP transforms knowledge gained in the PreStart modules into a well thought out plan, designed to facilitate the inmate's reintegration into the community. It further serves as the programmatic link between Phase I and Phase II components. Given its centrality to the successful achievement of fundamental PreStart goals, the following pages specifically examine how the IDP has been implemented during Phase I programming.

The amount of attention given to IDPs in the institutions evidenced a wide range, and this has significant implications for articulation of Phase II programming. While at some institutions with better developed Phase I programming, more attention was given to assisting inmates in the development of IDPs, nowhere did the evaluation team see IDPs being developed with the level of emphasis necessary for them to serve their intended role. IDPs of the inmates sampled were collected at a majority of the sites visited. For the most part they were not tailored to individual needs and situations. In fact, they tended to be comprised of fairly vacuous and non-directional goal and activity statements.

The designated role of PreStart agents in guiding the development of IDPs was not achieved. At a few institutions, inmates met individually with PreStart agents for guidance, explanation, and instruction in completing the IDP. But in most institutions no individual

attention seemed directed towards inmates, and forms were filled out in groups during the PreStart module. In a number of instances, IDPs did not appear to be completed at all. While three hours per week is not expected to be enough time to meet individually with inmates for the time necessary to complete an IDP in a meaningful manner, even individualized attention within the classroom and a presentation emphasizing the potential value of IDPs would be beneficial.

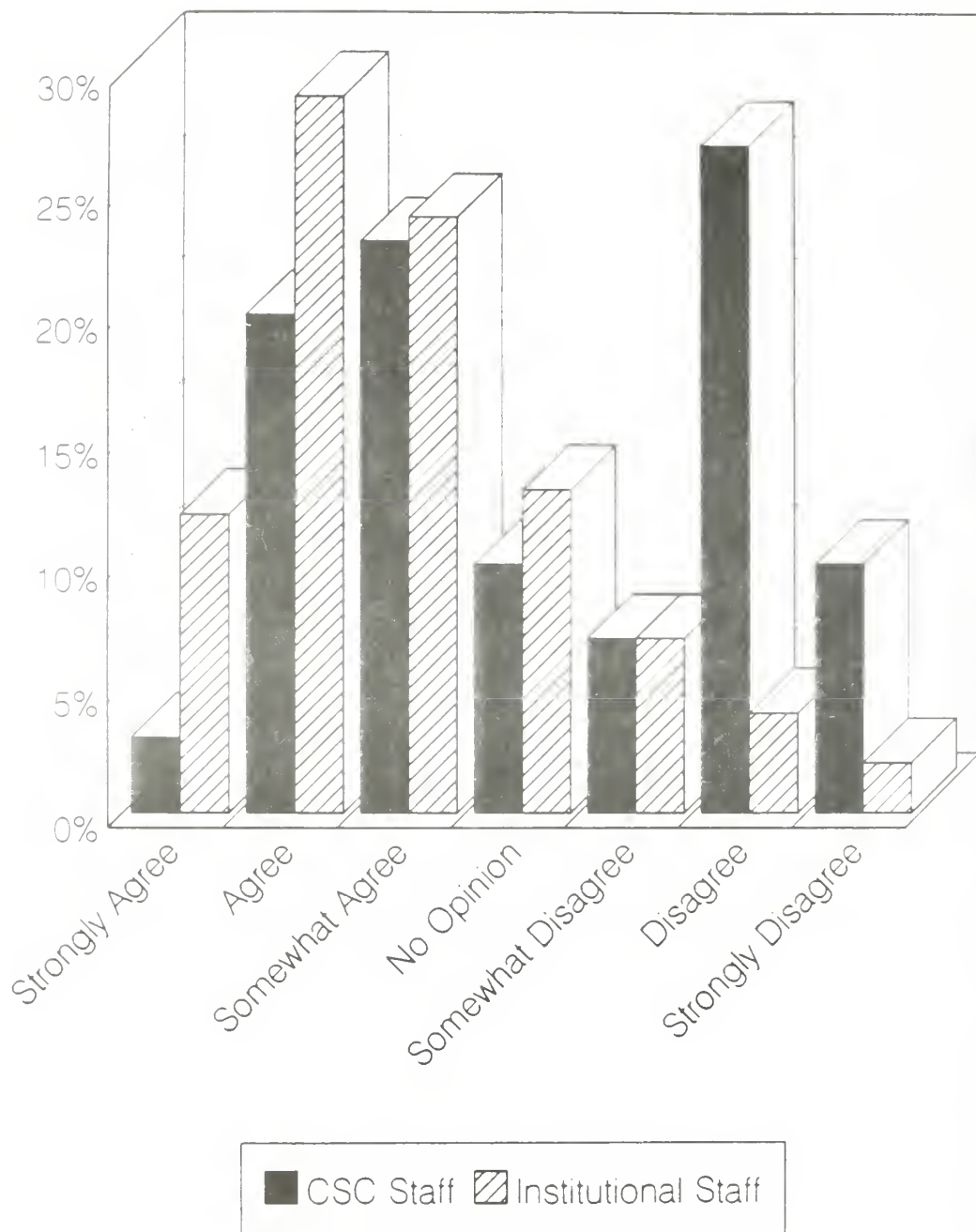
An impediment relating to the successful development of meaningful IDPs appears to be a lack of clear guidelines for their completion, as well as a lack of consensus on the purpose for completing the form at all. Even in one institution with a well developed Phase I program, staff were advising inmates to keep their IDPs very general and very simple so that their goals could easily be achieved. It was stated that this was the best way to be recommended for early discharge from parole. This seems to circumvent the objective of having the IDP as a meaningful, individual life plan.

Figures 3.5 and 3.6 display relevant data collected in the staff surveys. Figure 3.5 indicates that among both CSC and institutional staff, opinion on the usefulness of the IDP varies. CSC staff were less likely than institutional staff to see the IDP as useful. Figure 3.6 shows similarly mixed perceptions on the issue of whether the IDPs are tailored to meet the needs of individual inmates. Most institutional staff either had no opinion (32%) or disagreed (28%) with the statement that IDPs were tailored to specific needs.

The comments of a Community Services staff member summarize some of the problems associated with implementing the IDP as the main tool of articulation and linkage between Phase I and Phase II programming:

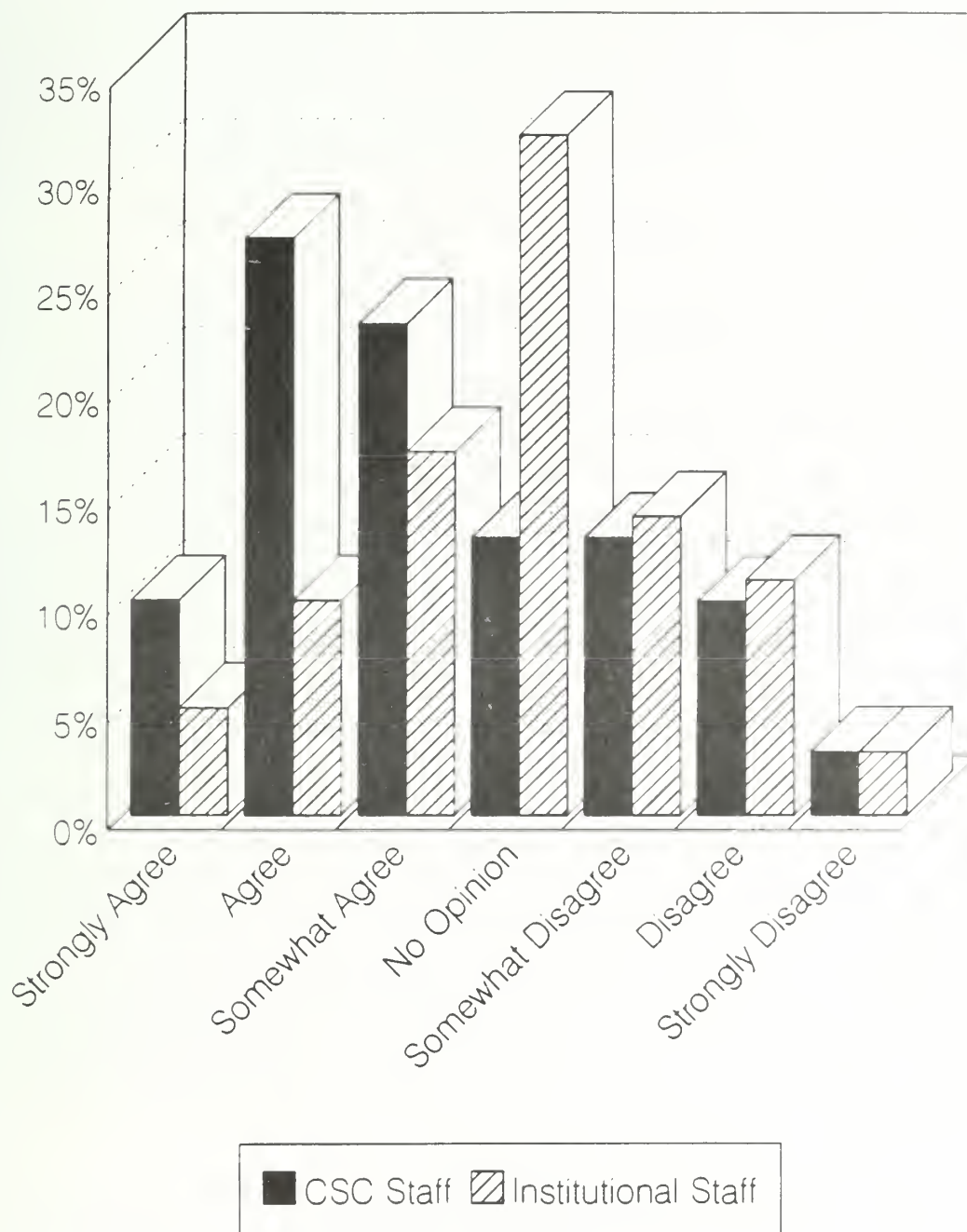
IDPs seem to be the link between Phase I and II, but with the IDPs there's really little link. The whole concept has problems. It would work well if the person were motivated and had the intellectual facility to complete an IDP. The Phase II staff had no training on it; I trained my staff. It is of little utility to us, many guys don't bring them in, we don't get them necessarily from the institutions, or an agent will spend 1/2 hour filling it out with someone and then find it in the garbage.

**Figure 3.5**  
**Staff Perceptions That IDP's Are Useful**





**Figure 3.6**  
**Staff Perceptions That IDP's Are Not Tailored to Specific Inmates**





These comments do not reflect the characterization of the IDP as the central element used to promote the definition of the goals and objectives learned as a result of 30 hours of Phase I instruction. Ideally the newly released inmate who had carefully worked out a plan for reintegration would carry this plan to a Community Service Center where a PreStart agent would assist him/her in finding the community resources necessary for achieving these goals. At least from the Phase I perspective, it is clear that this scenario is not likely to occur.

### **Implementation at Community Correctional Centers**

The following discussion of the implementation of PreStart at Community Correctional Centers (CCCs) is separate from the presentation of institutional Phase I implementation because Community Correctional Centers present some very distinct programmatic and implementation issues. Observations and interviews were conducted at four facilities. One facility was visited a number of times while the other sites were the subject of one-day visits. The visits took place between July and October of 1992. The site visit data are supplemented by a review of relevant IDOC documentation, including survey results from a number of facilities in the summer of 1992 conducted by the PreStart Coordinator for Community Correctional Centers.

A truncated 10-hour version of the PreStart curriculum was mandated to be introduced at all Community Correctional Centers. In general, the implementation of PreStart has been much less successful in the CCCs than in prison facilities. The evaluation team witnessed extreme variation in the degree to which PreStart was implemented as a bona fide program with potentially meaningful consequences for offender reintegration into the community across the CCCs.

### **Staff Dispositions: Programming Redundancy?**

A common explanatory factor for the above implementation pattern, which both illustrates the strength of CCCs in promoting offender reintegration and serves as a barrier to the successful implementation of PreStart, was that staff viewed the program as being essentially superfluous to existing programming. This resulted in a general lack of

enthusiasm about the program among primary program implementors.

While acknowledging PreStart's priority status within the Department, one interviewee's statement was reflective of a common view expressed among Community Correctional Center staff: "Somebody has discovered what we have been doing all along." Accordingly, PreStart was interpreted as being very consistent with existing programming and the implementation of PreStart was not perceived as requiring significant changes in operations. Thus, little changed.

As an example, one respondent stated that s/he thought the PreStart curriculum to be inadequate because it does not cover topical areas fully. S/he also indicated that the curriculum is largely redundant to what is already provided in the CCC, and what *is* being done (in terms of PreStart) is being done primarily to "cover your ass." The lack of a positive normative orientation has overpowered the department's internal compliance mechanisms as a generator of program development in the Community Correctional Centers. Staff seem to be going through the motions to minimally accommodate Central Office mandates in delivering PreStart. This results in less than adequate programming. As one respondent suggested:

The bottom line is that too many people don't want to be involved with PreStart because they feel they are too busy already. The word has come down that they have to do it but it's given to a Coordinator who doesn't often buy into it. So there aren't enough people involved, and many that are, [are] not really supportive. In some places, outside people are used effectively and sometimes do the whole program and while that's great, it's not what PreStart should be. Everyday in a CCC should be a day in PreStart. We need to make that a reality. At CCCs, there is often no distinct PreStart program. It needs to be better defined, it needs to be sold, it should be a 'frame of mind.' *Every* staff member has to know PreStart and reinforce basic PreStart concepts. It is what we are supposed to be doing anyway, especially at CCCs. And it all starts with your supervisor. Staff will always have excuses not to do certain things. But all that is needed to change is the support in the right places.

While this opinion was perhaps the most forceful one articulated, it was not a lone sentiment. Comments from other respondents suggested that "support in the right places" was not being applied. A number of key PreStart service deliverers indicated that they have had little to no formal communication with Central Office staff about PreStart. One PreStart Coordinator stated: "I have been left largely to do my own thing and Central Office has never solicited my views. If I have something to say I pass it to on to my facility director

and leave it at that." A respondent at another facility stated: "PreStart was dumped on the facility, the Director dumped it on a Correctional Counselor, who then split it in half with me."

This situation is understandable given how thinly stretched PreStart Central Office officials have been in developing, administering, and monitoring PreStart with the initial primary focus being placed on institutional programs. Nevertheless, Community Correctional Center programming should be examined closely in the near future, to reduce the risk of negative programming patterns becoming institutionalized.

### **Program Structures**

Unlike the mandate given to institutions, which demanded a strict adherence to the Central Office dictated schedule for the delivery of PreStart classes, there was no pattern to the scheduling of PreStart classes offered in a number of CCCs. In some CCCs this was directly attributable to the heavy programming required of residents and the lack of a consistent staffing pattern for the PreStart modules, but it seemed to be most directly related to a lack of internal prioritization.

For instance, the structure of PreStart was very amorphous at a number of facilities. New inmates are often given an orientation shortly after they arrive, often on a one-to-one basis. Evaluation staff witnessed an orientation for four residents at one facility and it was clearly a facility orientation devoted to filling out necessary paperwork rather than a PreStart orientation. Residents were asked to sign forms that were not discussed or explained. The session lasted 1 and 1/4 hours, with topics being covered haphazardly and residents being told to read the information later on for more understanding. This was particularly problematic for one member of the group because he could not read nor write and barely spoke English. Not even a minimal gesture was made to accommodate his situation. Our impression is that this facility is not atypical. Across facilities, class times for the remaining modules were not often set in advance and modules were commonly presented on an *ad hoc* basis.

### **External/Internal Resource Utilization**

A strength at a number of facilities was the level of external resources utilized in

delivering PreStart. A number of facilities used some key outside services for PreStart; including employment counselors, certified substance abuse counselors, mental health counselors, and master-level college student volunteers. A concern surrounding these practices emerged. It seemed that the facilities with the strongest pre-release programming used external resources to a greater degree than facilities where extant programming was weakest. It is difficult to tell whether the use of external people was facilitated by a strong pre-release program, or if their use promoted the strength of Phase I programming.

Rather surprising, given PreStart's administrative locus, was the discovery that PreStart at the CCCs exhibited a notable lack of parole agent involvement. Parole agents were not involved in development of IDPs or in classroom instruction. In addition, facility staff tended to express little knowledge about Phase II services. Thus, while external resources were often utilized in the CCCs, a potentially valuable resource--PreStart agents--appeared to be under utilized.

A related issue that emerged at a number of facilities was the weak links developed with correctional institutions. It was said that institutions often fail to provide documentation on whether inmates have gone through PreStart. Some staff reported that many inmates say that they had PreStart in prison but the documentation is not there to support the claims. Therefore the naturally resistant resident is required to take PreStart again.

### **Electronic Detention (ED)**

A major issue affecting CCCs uniquely is the provision of PreStart to offenders in the electronic monitoring program. The rapid expansion of the ED program has resulted in large numbers of offenders, especially ED 90s (the IDOC term for ED clients passing through the CCCs to be administratively processed with orientation and security briefings being provided) for the electronic detention program. Many of the ED clients have not had PreStart in the institution, and do not benefit from it at the CCCs before leaving the facility. In response, facilities are making a variety of adaptations. One is now requiring the ED 90s to come back to the facility to get the balance of the PreStart modules not taken. Other facilities provide an individualized session with the releasee, lasting varying periods of time. At one facility, the outgoing clients were provided a specialized PreStart booklet designed to provide basic information about jobs and substance abuse. It was reported that this practice "was stopped

because people complained about the paper costs." Clearly, it would behoove the Department to issue a clear and formal policy on how ED clients should be handled when they have not received institutional PreStart programming.

### **Community Correctional Center Summary**

All is not negative with regard to PreStart programming at Community Correctional Centers. A paradox presents itself, however. Facilities that have developed a positive atmosphere between residents and staff and in which pre-release programming is strong, will provide only marginally increased benefits to residents if a strong PreStart program is implemented. Facilities that could benefit organizationally from a strong PreStart program do not have such programs -- and thus, their clients lose the potential benefits. While leadership is obviously a key in turning these negative situations around, there are committed persons already on staff within CCCs who can help remedy the situation. These individuals should be located and assigned to facilities deemed as having difficulties in implementing PreStart successfully.

In some places, very strong negative attitudes towards residents and reintegrative programming were discovered. Such attitudes are found throughout the correctional system, but some particular manifestations are unique to Community Correctional Centers. A sampling of such attitudes, themes of non-commitment to PreStart, were identified in the statements heard during a single staff interview. They include:

1. The department didn't get input from line people and attempted to implement PreStart without baseline data or having an understanding of what's happening at the facilities. **Theme: Lack of Ownership**
2. They've thrown more at us without additional support. **Theme: Inadequate Resources**
3. Goals of PreStart may be better suited for a smaller target population. Its OK for institutions where there's time and a lack of programming but not at work release. Inmates should be prepared before they hit the CCC's. **Theme: Anyplace but Here**
4. Now we've got a different breed of residents. They are hard core, involved in gangs and drugs. They are more difficult, many are just filling beds here and shouldn't be here. **Theme: Denying the Targets of Change**
5. PreStart should not be mandated. People should mandate themselves. In the old days, people did volunteer and it worked better. **Theme: Only People That Want To**



## **Change Benefit**

6. PreStart is fine the first week folks are here because they are receptive and all ears. But after a while, with the peer pressure and going back into the halls, effects dissipate. **Theme: Temporary Effects**

7. They know they're not being held accountable like they used to be, so it's uphill. We try to stop them from screwing up early on--getting them some information and insight. It would be better, however, if there were more guidelines and more rules that they had to follow. **Theme: Lack of Offender Accountability**

8. It's hypocritical to tell them that they have to do something and then turn your back when they don't. **Theme: the "Shell Game"**

9. We were told we had to do something so we decided to do what works for us and our guys. We've been doing PreStart for the last 6 to 7 years anyway. **Theme: Program Redundancy**

10. The biggest change with PreStart is the increased paperwork. We had IPCs (individual program contracts for work release) and now we have IDPs. It's pretty repetitive. **Theme: More Bureaucracy**

The negativity displayed by this counselor, and others like him/her, is generally picked up by the inmates. The resulting alienation tends to do more to undermine the potential value of PreStart than any other single factor encountered in evaluating staff observations of PreStart's Phase I implementation.

## **Chapter Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter provided an overview of the organizational environment in which PreStart was implemented, highlighting the less than ideal context in which it was translated into action. A number of general factors influential in shaping program implementation were discussed. The chapter examined the implementation of Phase I programming and assessed how a variety of system-wide and facility based factors promoted an uneven level of implementation across facilities. In particular, the introduction of an inadequate program model and curriculum under fairly rigid implementation conditions established by Central Office aggravated existing morale and staffing patterns. It was not widely perceived by program implementors that an adaptive implementation process was being utilized by IDOC. Consequently, not feeling an "ownership" of the change, many staff are still hostile towards



the PreStart program and how it was implemented. The implementation process was plagued by inadequate resources in the form of staff, instructional materials, and physical space to deliver the program. Communication patterns were also quite weak within many facilities and between Central Office and facility staff. Many staff did not understand the goals of PreStart and the **necessity of its implementation**. Orientation and meaningful staff training/development programs were lacking during the early stages of implementation.

Despite the many significant barriers to successful implementation, evaluation staff witnessed the existence of many bona fide Phase I programs. The key factors resulting in these outcomes were the acknowledged priority given PreStart by the Director and his immediate staff, the vigilance of certain Community Services Division staff to "keep things afloat," and strong administrative support for PreStart by high level facility administrators. Visible, active, and forceful support of PreStart was demonstrated in a variety of ways -- e.g., in the form of attending classes and graduation ceremonies, assigning committed and competent staff to key PreStart functions, lubricating relationships across organizational subunits, etc. This support appeared to be the key factor distinguishing successful programs from unsuccessful programs.

Notably, the degree of implementation success did not appear overly constrained by facility security level, inmate population composition, or resource levels. Only in one facility were resource levels so low that the integrity of the PreStart program was jeopardized. Committed staff, who are more likely to remain vitalized if supported by team teaching and staff rotation patterns, were found at all site visits, but at some facilities the staff as well as the inmates were disaffected and demoralized. This tended to reflect general organizational cultures more so than anything specific about PreStart.

The process and outcome of IDP development was also examined, given the centrality of the IDP to effective PreStart programming. In general, and across all facilities, IDP's play a limited role in Phase I efforts. They are not taken seriously by most staff and inmates, and are not tailored to reflect the unique needs of particular individuals.

Implementation at Community Correctional Centers was generally much weaker than at correctional institutions. This tended to reflect the greater flexibility allowed CCCs in the offering of PreStart than the institutions by Central Office, as well as the common view of CCC staff that PreStart is redundant to extant pre-release programming. This presumed

redundancy was not found to be true, however. The CCCs with the weakest PreStart programs also exerted questionable levels of effort to promote the reintegration of their residents.



## CHAPTER FOUR: INMATE REACTIONS TO PRESTART

An evaluation of any program would be greatly lacking if the consumers and clients were not asked about their levels of satisfaction with the products and/or services delivered. Thus, a systematic evaluation of PreStart must include input from the clients it serves, inmates--a captive population often seen as passively reacting to what is being presented in the correctional environment. Inmates are very rarely asked to express what they think about correctional programming, but as will be illustrated in the following pages, what they have to say may be much more telling than what is said by staff or external evaluators. In the preceding chapters, we have detailed the many constraints and obstacles encountered during the development and implementation of PreStart. One may wonder, given what has been reported, "How could inmates possibly have anything good to say about their experiences with PreStart?" This chapter suggests that even in the worst of conditions, a vital and innovative correctional philosophy of service delivery, which primarily tries to "help", can generate many positive outcomes.

### Methodology

Attempts were made at each correctional facility visited to survey inmates who had completed at least half of the PreStart modules and who were scheduled to be released from the facility to mandatory supervision within three months. The goals of these attempts included: 1) generating information to enhance the present implementation analysis; and 2) developing a sample of inmates to be tracked for at least one year in the community for purposes of conducting subsequent recidivism analyses.

Initially, up to 50 inmates were randomly selected from each facility based on pre-determined eligibility criteria for inclusion within the study. Shortly thereafter, realizing that attrition was proving greater than expected, the target sample size was increased to 65 inmates from each facility, thus further assuring that a minimum of 50 completed questionnaires would be obtained from each facility. This also served to compensate for the relatively small number of residents at Community Correctional Centers (CCCs) who met the pre-determined eligibility requirements at any one point in time (on average about 15). Questionnaires were administered to the selected inmates in a group setting. Additionally, to

increase response rates and the validity of the responses, attempts were made to pre-identify the reading level of inmates, and to administer the questionnaire to inmates with poor reading skills in much smaller groups (one staff to two or three inmates). These attempts proved quite successful.

Table 4.1 details inmate response patterns from these visits by facility. Facilities are identified by letters of the alphabet instead of their real names. The same letter is used to identify each facility throughout this chapter. While some variation exists across facilities (46.8% effective completion rate for Facility J versus 100% for Facility I and Facility M), the overall effective response rate is very high (76.3%). This response rate is considered to be very acceptable, and internal reliability and validity checks indicate that the data are of high quality.

At the outset, a total of 659 inmates were targeted for survey purposes. Seventy-seven were inaccessible for a variety of reasons (11.7% of total) and twenty-one did not meet inclusionary criteria (3.2%). Of those targeted for inclusion in the study, 424 agreed to participate in the study (64.3%), 131 refused (19.8%), and 6 cannot be accounted for (.9%). Responses from individuals who attempted to complete the questionnaire resulted in 410 useable survey questionnaires. Because of the voluntary nature of participation in the study, some non-response bias is expected. Evaluation team observations indicated that refusal rates were highest among the most alienated and hostile inmates, who also tended to be the youngest inmates. Accordingly, inmate responses discussed in this chapter will tend to overrepresent the views of individuals who are more likely to perceive their entire correctional experience in a positive light. The relatively low non-response rate suggests, however, that biases found in the data cannot account for more than a small proportion of the variation in findings that are reported.

Upon completion of the group administered questionnaires, mass interviews were conducted with the inmate samples at each facility. Following a standard protocol, they were asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of PreStart programming, to assess perceived levels of staff and administration commitment to PreStart, to evaluate the quality of instruction, and to make recommendations for improved programming. Discussion was often quite animated and telling, with sessions often lasting up to one hour. Comments varied, but

**TABLE 4.1**  
**INMATE RESPONSE PATTERNS BY FACILITY**

Facility	Initial Subjects	Completed or Attempted	Refusal	Inaccessible	Ineligible	Missing	Effective Response Rate*
A	73	47	19	3	3	0	71.2%
B	36	21	13	7	0	0	63.6%
C	8	4	7	7	0	0	50.0%
D	86	48	13	11	2	0	78.6%
B	61	38	7	11	5	0	84.4%
C	64	51	13	7	0	0	79.7%
C	56	38	13	3	0	0	71.6%
H	60	48	13	7	0	0	77.9%
I	45	43	0	2	0	0	100.0%
J	61	22	24	7	2	0	46.8%
K	16	9	0	6	0	0	90.9%
B	14	8	3	3	0	0	72.7%
M	17	15	0	7	0	0	100.0%
N	62	34	9	19	0	0	78.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>76.3%</b>

\*The Effective Response Rate is the number of people who agreed to participate divided by the number approached who were eligible for inclusion in the study.

on the whole were quite positive. Also, there was a good deal of variation in inmate responses across facilities, which tended to parallel staff assessments and evaluative staff observations, and which suggested that even very alienated inmates often agreed to participate in the study.

It must be emphasized that the following assessments of PreStart programming are confined to Phase I pre-release efforts, as data on releasee reactions to Phase II programming are currently not available. Further, these data represent reactions to Phase I programming at single points in time, by inmates whose responses may reflect the then relevant environmental



(e.g., a lockdown being in place at one facility) and situational factors (e.g., an inmate leader promotes negativity among the respondents at the time of the session). Thus, we suggest that response patterns may be unstable and not fully indicative of reactions that may have been generated if the surveys were conducted at different points in time or under different situations. Accordingly, interpretations of the following data and the development of institutional responses to the findings that are presented should be done with these considerations in mind.

## **The Sample**

Table 4.2 presents some basic descriptive information on the inmates who responded to the survey. Generally, they tend to be a bit older than the general population of IDOC inmates who are released from correctional facilities. The sample also over-represents females (21.6% vs. 6.4% of the IDOC exits for FY 92), and Hispanics (12.7% vs. 7.7% of the IDOC exits for FY 92). Correspondingly, the sample underrepresents males (73.5% vs. 93.6% of IDOC exits), and blacks (54.2% vs. 62.2% of IDOC exits).

Inmates in the sample also clearly represent a group of people exhibiting obvious educational (only 32% completed high school) and employment needs (45.5% were unemployed during the six months prior to being incarcerated). Upon release, reintegrative needs prominently feature the acquisition of a job (only about 30% had jobs already lined up), and housing (with 10% of the inmates having indefinite or no residential plans).

This is reaffirmed by the data presented in Table 4.2A, which indicates that the primary concerns and need areas of inmates to be released relate to jobs and money. A large percentage of the inmates also reported having used illegal drugs during the six months before their incarceration (55.6%), many of whom used drugs daily or multiple times per week (47.4%). Further, a significant percentage reported using highly addictive drugs such as cocaine (32.4%) and opiates (14.8%).

The portrait of these inmates is generally quite compatible with what is known about the characteristics of prison inmates nationwide as well as within the State of Illinois. The willingness to report on histories of substance abuse (in numbers comparable to other surveys of prison inmates), and a positive rapport that was often developed by the evaluation staff with the inmates, suggest that these data, and data that will be presented regarding perceptions of PreStart, appear valid.

**TABLE 4.2**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INMATE SAMPLE**  
(N=426)

**AGE:**

Mean = 29.99  
Standard Deviation = 8.47

**SEX:**

Male: 74.2%  
Female: 19.9  
Missing: 4.9

**RACE:**

White: 25.1%  
Black: 54.2  
Hispanic: 12.7  
Native American: 3.3  
Asian: .9  
Other: 1.4  
Missing: 2.3

**LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:**

Elementary School: 6.1%  
1-3 Years High School: 32.6  
1-3 Years H.S. GED: 24.2  
High School Graduate: 15.5  
1-3 Years College: 15.7  
4+ Years College: 1.6  
Missing: 4.2

**EMPLOYMENT IN 6 MOS.  
BEFORE INCARCERATION?**

Employed: 52.6%  
Unemployed: 45.5  
Missing: 1.9

**DRUG USE IN 6 MOS.  
BEFORE INCARCERATION?**

No: 39.9%  
Yes: 55.6  
Missing: 4.5

**JOB LINED UP WHEN RELEASED?**

No: 44.4%  
Yes: 29.6  
Unsure: 23.2  
Missing: 2.8

**FREQUENCY OF DRUG USE:**

Not applicable: 36.9%  
Daily: 16.2  
Almost Daily: 15.7  
Few Times a Week: 15.5  
Once a Week: 1.9  
Few Times a Month: 6.3  
Once a Month: 1.2  
Once/Few Times: 2.8

**PLACE TO LIVE AFTER RELEASE?**

No: 4.2%  
Yes: 87.8  
Unsure: 5.9

**PERCENT USING:**

Marijuana: 39.2%  
Opiates: 14.8  
Cocaine: 32.4  
Hallucinogens: 6.1

**TABLE 4.2A**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF INMATE PERCEIVED PROBLEMS, AND DESCRIPTIVE**  
**STATISTICS**  
**(N=426)**

Source of Problem	Not a Problem (%)	Minor Problem (%)	Somewhat Problem (%)	Major Problem (%)	Missing	Mean	SD
Finding a Job	30.5%	14.8%	19.5%	18.3%	16.9%	3.27	2.2
Transportation	46.2	9.4	13.1	13.1	18.1	2.60	2.2
Clothes	55.2	6.6	7.7	12.2	18.3	2.27	2.1
Coping with Life	37.1	15.3	15.7	12.7	19.2	2.85	2.1
Medical/Dental Needs	42.5	11.5	13.8	13.1	18.8	2.53	2.1
Conditions of Parole	60.8	8.9	6.8	4.5	18.8	1.67	1.5
Doing Drugs	57.5	7.7	6.8	6.1	18.8	1.83	1.6
Place to Live	62.2	4.2	7.5	8.7	17.4	1.72	1.7
Family Conflict	58.2	8.2	9.4	5.2	19.0	1.83	1.6
Support Family	28.9	13.1	16.4	24.6	16.9	3.50	2.4
Bad Crowd	54.5	8.2	8.5	11.3	17.6	2.09	1.9
Labeled as Ex-Con	39.4	11.3	14.3	16.2	18.8	2.98	2.3
Not Able to Read/Write	63.4	7.7	6.6	3.3	19.0	1.55	1.3
Drinking Too Much	61.5	7.7	4.7	6.1	20.0	1.71	1.6
Acceptance from Others	60.3	9.2	6.8	4.7	19.0	1.67	1.5
Being a Good Parent	57.0	6.3	6.3	5.2	25.1	1.66	1.5
Getting Legal Help	49.5	9.9	11.7	8.5	20.4	2.23	2.0
Getting Someone to Talk To	54.0	7.5	10.6	10.1	17.8	2.13	2.0
Enough Money to Start	28.6	9.4	16.0	29.3	16.7	3.68	2.5
Using My Spare Time	61.5	8.9	8.5	3.1	18.1	1.69	1.4
Safe from Physical Harm	59.9	11.5	7.5	1.9	19.2	1.57	1.1
Having a Plan	50.5	15.3	11.5	4.5	18.3	1.98	1.5
Hassles from Government	53.5	9.4	8.2	7.5	21.4	2.01	1.8
Dealing with Temper	44.6	11.7	16.4	8.5	18.8	2.46	1.9
Having Good Job Skills	47.2	12.9	13.8	8.5	17.6	2.31	1.9
Going Back to Prison	51.9	8.9	8.5	11.7	19.0	2.27	2.1

## Inmate Perceptions of PreStart

### Baseline Assessments

Evaluations utilizing inherently subjective data benefit by developing a base line to which comparisons can be made. That is, when someone is asked what s/he thinks about something, it is often useful to ask, "compared to what?" This procedure was incorporated into the inmate questionnaire. For instance, inmates were asked to respond to the following question: "Overall, how would you describe the effect of the PreStart experience on your life?" Possible responses were framed in a Likert-type scale, with a range of 5 (extremely positive) to 0 (no effect) to -5 (extremely negative). To develop a baseline, the same question was asked with the phrase "this prison experience" having been substituted for "PreStart experience."

Table 4.3 presents the resulting data broken down by facility. The first column indicates, rather surprisingly, that on average inmates reported that their present prison experience was generally something positive in their life. The large standard deviations (SD) relative to the reported means ( $\bar{x}$ ) indicate a great deal of variability in responses, however. The second column indicates that across all facilities, except for Facility A and Facility J, inmates on average thought that PreStart affected their lives positively and to a greater degree than did their overall period of incarceration. The differences in assessments were more pronounced in certain facilities than others; Facilities D, E, and L stand out in terms of the inmates' views of PreStart compared to prison overall, whereas little to no difference is evidenced at Facilities A, B, J, and N. These findings parallel the data found in the last three columns of Table 4.3, which present percentage distributions derived from combining responses to the above questions. These columns indicate that 37.5 percent of all respondents viewed PreStart as having more positive impacts than prison overall. One-third reported no difference between the two, and slightly less than 30 percent viewed prison more favorably, in terms of individual impacts, than PreStart. Inmates from Facilities A, B, H, and I were disproportionately represented within this latter group.

Female inmate respondents (housed at two female facilities and two co-ed facilities) were compared to male inmates on the above dimensions (data not presented in tabular form). In general, while females tended to view prison more favorably than did males (mean of 2.29 versus mean of 1.98), they were much more likely to think that PreStart impacted them more

positively than did males (mean of 3.41 versus 2.61).

**TABLE 4.3**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF PRISON VS. PRESTART IN OUR LIFE**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Effect of Prison			Effect of PreStart			PreStart More Positive Than Prison (%)	No Difference	PreStart Less Positive Than Prison (%)
	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	SD			
A	41	.68	3.20	43	4.00	3.21	19.5	31.7	48.8
B	20	1.80	2.88	20	2.15	2.01	42.9	21.1	36.8
C	4	3.75	1.50	4	4.00	.82	50.0	28.6	25.0
D	46	2.09	3.10	47	3.45	2.18	50.0	32.6	17.4
E	37	.89	3.89	38	3.74	1.57	59.5	27.0	13.5
F	47	2.33	3.27	48	3.23	1.96	34.0	38.6	23.4
G	37	2.38	2.64	37	3.03	1.90	27.0	54.1	18.9
H	44	2.59	2.79	45	3.20	1.90	43.2	18.2	38.6
I	43	2.53	2.96	42	3.24	1.74	35.7	26.2	38.1
I	20	2.5	3.66	21	2.33	2.48	25.0	45.0	30.0
K	7	2.29	3.45	7	2.59	1.90	42.9	28.6	28.6
C	8	1.25	3.54	8	2.63	3.46	37.5	37.5	25.0
M	14	2.36	2.79	15	2.87	1.96	42.9	21.4	35.7
N	29	2.17	3.30	29	2.21	2.32	27.6	41.1	31.0
TOTAL	397	2.02	3.29	404	2.74	2.39	37.5(148)	33.2(131)	29.4 (116)

*\*Both variables were measured along a scale with scores ranging from 5 (extremely positive) to -5 (extremely negative). A score of 0 represented No Effect.*

Another baseline from which inmate views of PreStart can be assessed is the comparison between how repeat prison incarcerates view PreStart relative to pre-release programming efforts they experienced during their earlier terms of incarceration. As PreStart Phase I represents a



significant increase in pre-release programming from the prior pre-release program in Illinois (referred to as "parole school"), it would be expected that PreStart inmates view PreStart as being much more helpful to them than the earlier parole school. The inmate sample included a number of individuals who reported that this was at least their second term in prison (35.9%). They were not necessarily confined previously in Illinois prisons, so the relative comparison may have not been "parole school." These individuals were asked to respond to the following question: "How does what you have experienced from PreStart differ from what happened earlier when you were about to be released?" Inmates used a scale ranging from 5 (much more helpful) to -5 (much less helpful) in comparing PreStart to prior pre-release experiences.

Table 4.4 presents the results and indicates that PreStart is considered by inmates, across almost all facilities, to be more helpful than the previous pre-release programming. Across all institutions the mean response was 2.2, which is associated with the response category "Somewhat More Helpful." At only two institutions (Facilities A and C) was the mean response less than zero, which is associated with the response category "No Difference." Even these scores, however, were only slightly negative (-0.36 and -0.25 respectively). Because the sample at Facility C was so small, these data are not substantively significant.

More positively, inmates at over half of the institutions sampled rated PreStart at 2 or higher compared to the earlier pre-release programming to which they were exposed. The highest ratings of PreStart were recorded at Facility L (5), Facility E (3.75), Facility H (3.67), and Facility D (3.62).

### **Perceptions of Instructional Quality**

All the inmates in the sample were asked to rate the quality of the PreStart instruction they had received (See Table 4.5). Inmates could choose either Very Poor, Poor, Adequate, Good, or Outstanding to reflect the quality of PreStart instruction. Not a single inmate rated the quality of PreStart instruction as very poor, so this category is not represented in the Table. Across institutions, most inmates (42%) ranked institutional PreStart instruction as "Good," and only 4.3 percent referred to the instruction as "Poor." Just over 30 percent felt the instruction to be "Outstanding" and 20.4 percent found it to be "Adequate." At one-half of the fourteen institutions PreStart instruction was rated as "Outstanding" by one-third or more of the inmates (Facilities B, C, D, E, F, J, and L). Only one institution had a relatively high percent of inmates



rate instruction as "Poor" (Facility A, 32 %). Otherwise, the percent of inmates rating instruction as "Poor" ranged from 0 to 6.3 percent. Women inmates were slightly more likely than male inmates to report that the quality of PreStart instruction was good (36 versus 33 percent) or outstanding (32 versus 24 percent).

**TABLE 4.4**  
**PERCEPTION OF THE VALUE OF PRESTART COMPARED TO EARLIER PRE-RELEASE**  
**PROGRAMMING OFFERED BY IDOC AMONG PEOPLE SERVING AT LEAST A SECOND PRISON**  
**TERM**  
**(BY FACILITY\*)**

Facility	Valid N	Mean	S.D.
A	36	-.36	2.70
B	13	.15	2.79
C	4	-.25	3.50
D	21	3.62	1.83
E	20	3.75	1.83
F	23	3.04	2.67
G	4	3.19	1.42
H	21	3.67	1.68
I	4	2.75	2.63
J	11	2.36	3.44
K	2	0.00	2.70
L	1	5.00	---
M	7	2.57	2.07
N	5	1.60	4.22

\*Based on responses to the question:

"How does what you have experienced from PreStart differ from what happened earlier when you were about to be released?"

Score range from 5 (Much More Helpful) to -5 (Much Less Helpful).

**TABLE 4.5**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION:**  
**"HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE INSTRUCTION YOU RECEIVED IN**  
**PRESTART?"**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Valid N	Percent Responding				
		Poor	Adequate	Good	Outstanding	Don't Remember
A	25	32.0	36.0	12.0	12.0	8.0
B	16	6.3	25.0	31.3	31.3	6.3
C	3	0.0	9.1	66.7	31.3	0.0
D	42	0.0	19.0	33.3	45.2	2.4
C	36	0.0	25.0	38.9	31.3	2.8
F	40	0.0	25.0	32.5	42.5	0.0
G	33	0.0	9.1	50.0	27.3	8.0
H	42	0.0	21.4	42.9	28.6	2.4
I	41	0.0	9.1	63.4	22.6	2.4
J	16	5.3	10.5	42.9	12.0	10.5
K	8	0.0	25.0	50.0	28.6	0.0
L	6	0.0	9.1	66.7	33.3	0.0
M	10	0.0	60.0	20.0	10.0	10.0
N	27	3.7	25.9	48.1	27.2	0.0
TOTAL	348	4.3	20.4	42.0	30.2	3.2

### Perceptions Regarding Preparation for Release

PreStart Phase I programming is intended to prepare inmates for release by providing them documents of immediate practical value (personal credentials, driver's license, job applications, resumes), planning skills (development of short and long term goals), self insight and control (stress reduction, coping skills), and vital information (community resources, location of Community Service Centers). One would expect that inmates would feel that PreStart offered them things helpful to them after release. In response to a strongly

worded negative item ("PreStart offers me nothing that will help me when I get out"), inmates could respond by selecting a value ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Across all institutions involved in the survey, 32 percent of inmates strongly disagreed with the statement that PreStart offered them nothing that would help them upon their release, and another 39 percent of inmates disagreed, for a total of 71 percent disagreeing that PreStart offered them nothing that was helpful (see Table 4.6). Only 20.8 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that PreStart offered them nothing that was helpful with release), and a disproportionate number of these respondents came from only a few facilities. Clearly, inmates have responded well to IDOC's attempts to provide them with a variety of resources that may ease the reintegration process.

**TABLE 4.6**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT:**  
**"PRESTART OFFERS NOTHING TO HELP ME FOR RELEASE"**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Valid N	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
D	(44)	22.7	10.0	0.0	36.4	18.2
B	(20)	25.0	6.5	25.0	35.0	10.0
D	(46)	6.5	4.3	6.5	37.0	45.7
E	(34)	2.9	14.7	8.7	32.4	44.1
E	(46)	8.7	14.7	4.3	41.3	34.8
L	(37)	5.4	4.3	5.4	40.5	40.5
H	(46)	8.7	10.9	4.3	39.1	37.0
D	(30)	7.0	16.3	2.3	44.2	30.2
J	(20)	4.3	5.0	10.0	35.0	50.0
K	(9)	22.2	22.2	11.1	33.1	11.1
L	(8)	0.0	12.5	37.5	4.3	50.0
M	(13)	4.3	7.7	23.1	46.2	23.1
D	(30)	10.0	13.3	10.0	53.3	13.3
TOTAL	(400)	9.5	11.3	7.8	39.0	32.5

## Perceptions Regarding Finding Help on the Outside

The change in Illinois' parole services under the PreStart program has been a change emphasizing the delivery of services to inmates within the community. The voluntary utilization of these services has placed importance on the responsibility of inmates to seek out help for themselves, with the aid of Phase II agents working in the Community Service Centers. Two survey questions inquired as to whether this emphasis on service delivery was being adequately presented to the inmates. In other words, did Phase I PreStart help them learn how better to get help on the outside if they needed it? Further, did they plan on utilizing the CSCs upon their release if they needed them?

Responses to the following two questions showed that indeed, Phase I of PreStart seems to have met these goals: "I now know better how to get help on the outside if I need it because of PreStart," and "Because of PreStart, I will utilize services from Community Service Centers." Again, inmates responded along a scale of 1 "Strongly Agree" to 5 "Strongly Disagree."

The results reveal that 66.5 percent felt that information received during PreStart instruction *did* teach them how to find help on the outside (see Table 4.7). Only a little over 23 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that PreStart had taught them how to find help. At eight of the fourteen institutions, a majority of the inmates believed PreStart to have helped them learn how to find help after release. Female inmates were much more likely than male inmates to state that PreStart taught them to find help on the outside (65 versus 52%).

**TABLE 4.7**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT:**  
**"PRESTART TAUGHT ME HOW TO FIND HELP ON THE OUTSIDE"**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Valid N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
D	(43)	7.0	34.9	0.0	27.9	25.6
B	(20)	10.0	25.0	25.0	20.0	20.0
D	(47)	40.4	40.0	6.4	8.1	0.0
L	11.1	40.0	40.0	8.1	5.7	0.0
L	(47)	27.7	27.7	12.8	14.9	17.0
G	11.1	43.2	35.1	8.1	5.4	0.0
H	(44)	43.2	36.4	0.0	6.8	6.8
B	11.1	28.0	46.5	18.6	9.3	4.7
J	(20)	30.0	40.0	15.0	15.0	0.0
K	(8)	22.2	36.7	44.4	11.1	11.1
L	(8)	12.5	25.0	50.0	12.5	0.0
M	(13)	23.1	23.1	38.5	15.4	0.0
N	(30)	33.3	36.7	0.0	11.1	13.3
TOTAL	(400)	30.5	36.0	12.3	11.8	9.5

Besides providing future releasees with knowledge about finding help in the community, Phase I information was supposed to make inmates aware of the services available to them via the CSCs. Although using CSC services is voluntarily, the majority of inmates either agreed or strongly agreed that they would utilize the Community Service Centers when they needed help--a total of 66.7 percent indicating that they would use CSCs (see Table 4.8). Almost 20 percent were not sure if they would use CSCs, and only 13.5 percent stated that they would not use the CSCs. There was little variation in responses from inmates across facilities, but that which existed paralleled response patterns noted earlier. The proportions of inmates reporting that they would use services at CSCs ranged from 35 percent at a facility



where the majority responded that they had no opinion on whether they would use the services (Facility A) to 84 percent at Facility D. In a pattern similar to those noted above, female inmates were more likely than male inmates to report the likelihood of utilizing services a CSCs because of PreStart.

**TABLE 4.8**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT:**  
**"BECAUSE OF PRESTART I WILL UTILIZE SERVICES FROM COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTERS**  
**WHEN I NEED THEM"**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Valid N	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	(43)	14.0	30.2	11.6	20.9	23.3
F	(20)	20.0	15.0	55.0	5.0	5.0
D	(48)	38.3	46.8	8.5	2.1	4.3
E	(35)	40.9	26.0	20.0	5.7	5.7
F	(48)	30.8	38.3	8.3	10.4	8.3
G	(36)	36.4	27.8	22.2	5.6	8.3
H	(44)	36.4	40.9	20.5	0.0	2.3
I	(43)	30.2	34.9	30.2	2.3	2.3
I	(20)	55.5	15.0	20.0	5.0	8.3
K	(8)	12.5	50.0	12.5	12.5	12.5
F	(8)	12.5	50.0	25.0	0.0	12.5
M	(13)	36.4	38.5	30.8	5.0	0.0
N	(30)	16.7	46.8	23.3	3.3	10.0
TOTAL	(399)	31.6	35.1	19.8	6.0	7.5

### Perceived Value of the Individual Development Plan

Along with providing inmates information on the services provided by Community Service Centers, the primary programmatic element within PreStart intending to link Phase I and Phase II programming is the Individual Development Plan (IDP). The importance of the IDP was stressed by IDOC throughout the development of PreStart, as it reflects many of the primary goals of the program such as preparing inmates for life after prison and placing

importance on the individual inmate's responsibilities to plan and implement life goals. One question asked of the inmates at the institutions specifically addressed IDPs by having them respond to the statement: "Developing an Individual Development Plan has been a very useful experience" along a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (see Table 4.9).

• Very few inmates felt that the experience of creating an IDP was less than useful (6.9% disagreeing with IDP's usefulness, and 6.1% strongly disagreeing). A little over one-quarter of the inmates had no opinion about the usefulness of developing an IDP, leaving 61.5 percent either agreeing or agreeing strongly that developing an IDP was a useful experience. The responses varied across different institutions. Combining those responses that exhibited agreement with the statement that developing an IDP was useful, institutional percentages ranged from 38.9 percent agreeable responses (Facility B) to 80.8 percent (Facility D). The percent of inmates disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the usefulness of developing the IDP ranged from 0 percent (Facilities K and L) to 40.5 percent (Facility A). Typically however, the percent disagreeing was small, with eleven of the fourteen facilities having around 10 percent of the inmates disagreeing that the IDP was a useful experience for them.

Two of the Community Correctional Centers had a substantially higher percent response for "no opinion." The average of "no opinion" across institutions was 25.5 percent, but both Facilities L and B exhibited almost twice this percentage, with 50 percent of the inmates reporting "no opinion." Researchers administering the questionnaires at these sites relayed that the "no opinion" response was often used as a default response for "don't remember." If it is true that inmates at these institutions do not remember developing their IDPs, the usefulness of both the experience of developing the document, and the probability that it will be thoughtfully implemented, are low.

While the information concerning inmates' reactions to working on an IDP are extremely positive overall, the true test of the IDP, as well as all aspects of successful community adjustment, will be determined during Phase II of PreStart. At that point, the issue of linkage between Phase I and II (making sure IDPs are available to agents) as well as the practical function of the IDPs (are the goals meaningful or practical) will be raised. These issues, addressed in Chapter Three, will continue to be important to PreStart's implementation--perhaps more important than the relative usefulness of the inmates

experiences in developing the IDP.

**TABLE 4.9**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT:**  
**"DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN HAS BEEN A VERY USEFUL**  
**EXPERIENCE"**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Valid N	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I	(42)	19.0	23.8	16.7	16.7	23.8
L	(13)	22.2	15.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
D	(47)	10.6	57.1	10.6	6.4	2.1
E	(34)	26.5	38.2	26.5	8.8	0.0
E	(46)	28.3	39.5	28.3	4.3	2.2
G	(34)	33.3	33.9	22.2	8.3	2.2
H	(45)	28.9	20.0	37.8	2.2	4.4
I	(43)	34.9	39.5	20.0	0.0	7.7
J	(20)	40.0	15.0	20.0	15.0	10.0
K	(7)	14.3	57.1	20.0	0.0	0.0
E	(8)	12.5	39.5	50.0	0.0	0.0
M	(13)	30.8	39.5	39.5	0.0	7.7
N	(34)	13.3	36.7	20.0	13.3	10.0
TOTAL	(392)	27.6	33.9	25.5	6.9	6.1

### Perceptions of Administrative Reactions to PreStart

The success of implementation achieved by new correctional programs is determined largely by the attitudes and behaviors of the institutional administrators, which tend to filter down to the inmates and influence their receptivity to correctional programming.

Accordingly, a number of questionnaire items attempted to measure how inmates perceived the facility administration's reaction to PreStart. Inmates were asked to respond to the statement: "The administration at this facility gives PreStart good lip service but little else."

Based on comments gleaned from group discussions with inmates, their judgments tended to be founded on what we consider to be valid indicators of administrative support for PreStart. These include the extent to which higher level staff and administrators sat in on PreStart classes, whether the Warden appeared at the PreStart graduation ceremony (if there was one), institutional priority given for inmates to get to class on time and to stay there -- i.e., the ease with which conflicting appointments or assignments were rescheduled -- and so forth.

The responses across institutions to the above question (see Table 4.10) indicate that approximately 20 percent of the inmates strongly agreed that the facility administration gives PreStart good lip service but little else. Another 20 percent merely agreed with this statement and 30 percent had no opinion. Twenty percent of the inmates disagreed that administrative backing was only talk, and 10 percent strongly disagreed. In sum, about 40 percent felt administrative support was just "lip service" and 30 percent disagreed (with the other 30% having no opinion).

Inmates' responses to this question were often congruent with what staff reported concerning administrative support at various institutions (discussed in Chapter Three). No institution seems particularly unique in terms of inmates' perceptions of administrative support. The highest percentages of inmates feeling it is mostly lip service (strongly agreeing) were 36.8 percent at Facility J, 35.7 percent at Facility A, and 35 percent at Facility B. The lowest percentages were reported at Facility I (7.3%), Facility G (11%), and Facility A (12.5%).

In group discussions with inmates, the attitude of "why should we take it seriously, if they don't think it's important" was echoed at several institutions. Likewise, administrative support actions influence the behavior of front-line staff delivering Phase I programming, who are in direct contact with inmates. Inmates were highly affected by the attitudes of the staff, who in turn were affected by the attitudes of administrative personnel. Therefore, while this one question may not represent the most crucial element in programming, both the issues of administrative support and the inmates' perceptions of that support are important to PreStart and its implementation.



**TABLE 4.10**  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT: "THE ADMINISTRATION AT**  
**THIS FACILITY GIVES PRESTART GOOD LIP-SERVICE BUT LITTLE ELSE"**  
**(BY FACILITY)**

Facility	Valid N	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	(42)	35.7	20.0	9.5	14.3	11.9
B	(20)	35.7	20.0	35.0	5.0	5.0
D	(47)	14.9	11.8	27.7	25.5	10.0
E	(34)	20.6	11.8	29.4	20.0	17.6
F	(47)	14.9	27.7	27.7	11.8	10.6
L	(36)	11.1	22.2	27.7	25.0	13.9
H	(45)	20.0	15.6	11.8	15.6	11.9
A	(41)	7.3	20.0	46.3	11.8	4.9
J	(19)	36.8	11.8	15.8	21.1	10.0
K	(8)	20.0	20.0	37.5	12.5	4.9
L	(8)	12.5	11.8	50.0	25.0	0.0
M	(13)	23.1	15.4	30.8	23.1	7.7
N	(30)	20.6	10.0	33.3	20.0	10.0
TOTAL	(394)	20.3	19.5	29.9	19.8	10.4

### **Ideas for Improvement: Inmates' Own Words**

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were offered the opportunity to respond to an open ended question: "Do you feel that the PreStart program could be improved in any way? If so, what would you suggest as being the keys to improved services?" The written responses that follow have not been edited; rather, they appear as the inmates wrote them on the survey. It should be noted that these written responses may reflect the opinions of the more educated and articulate of the respondents. However, based on verbal responses to this same question during the inmate group discussions, the evaluation team feels that the following responses are generally reflective of the feelings and beliefs of the sample of inmates.



The issue of PreStart's mandatory nature was discussed. Inmates raised one problem of making PreStart mandatory:

It should not be mandatory. When it is your decision to do something you tend to get more out of it. I enjoyed and got a lot from it, but hated watching some people regretting having to be there day after day.

Improve it by making the classes optional...people who do not want to attend the PreStart program...their attendance in the classroom only acts as a deterrent upon students who would really like to receive the benefits of the PreStart program.

However, as the following respondent reflected, the mandatory nature of PreStart is sometimes beneficial:

When I first heard PreStart was mandatory I felt real negative towards it until I got into the darn thing, then I realized it was an excellent program and the most positive thing that has happened to me. Thanks to this program, for the first time in my life, I feel like I will make it in the free world.

Inmates also addressed the issue of the length and timing of the intervention:

PreStart could be better improved if the instructors here had a longer period of time to discuss the issues of the program...they could go into more depth about certain issues that which the inmates are having problems.

DOC should have a program like this when you first come in. To maybe get one started on how to set goals for himself and try to complete these goals by release.

If this is going to be mandatory it should be implemented at the beginning of the individuals sentence. There is good information in the program ...the most beneficial points in the program cannot be acted upon with any effect in a six month period [before release].

On the other hand, one inmate stated:

They should wait until a two week period before a person's out date, then send them to PreStart so they can leave with PreStart on their minds...the way it is now a person will forget what's taken place two months ago.

In terms of the elements of presentation and curricular material, inmates had the following suggestions:

PreStart can be improved by getting instructors who are more involved and concerned about the inmate....need an instructor who knows more about substance abuse.

...need more helpful and enthusiastic people that will let us know we can make it if we try.

PreStart would be greatly improved by having a successful convict come talk and share their prison experience and how they got their life together and show us how to do the same.

Being an inmate myself, I feel seeing or hearing an ex-convict success story would be a tremendous help. We need more positive examples.

Specific curriculum suggestions centered around wanting more practical and useable information:

Where does an inmate go to get a birth certificate if he doesn't have the \$10, and has no family to help him out?...I was told 'I don't know'...that is no answer to be given to anyone in this type of situation.

The PreStart program would be of greater service if the people running the class would have more answers to the questions that they are being asked. Such as when I was at PreStart a question was asked about how one could get funds once they are out. The question was not answered properly.

Well, by being Hispanic, I feel that you can help or the program can be improved by having the PreStart book in Spanish. I understand English but it could have been better if it was in Spanish for me.

While some of the comments made emphasized recommendations for improvements, more global comments tended to be complimentary of PreStart. In general, one inmate's comment summarizes these feelings in a dramatic way:

I have been doing time since 1981, I never remember attending PreStart during that time. But now, going through this program ...I feel there is a brighter future for me. PreStart made me realize that I can stay on the street with a job and a nice home or apartment. Through PreStart I realized that I can vote just like everybody else, no matter if I'm an ex-con, something I didn't know....I wish that this program continues to help people who are getting ready to be released from prison; for I know now that there is hope for us ex-cons. Thank you PreStart staff for your help and support.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has revealed that despite the chaotic and pressured policy arena in which PreStart was formulated and the less than ideal implementation environment that resulted, the Illinois Department of Corrections has put together a Phase I pre-release program that has

been very well received by the vast majority of its consumers. It is perceived generally to provide inmates with practical and meaningful skills, attitudes, and information that will help them make a smoother transition to the community. This was perceived to be the case especially among female inmates and among inmates at particular facilities. Some facilities have not presented PreStart in a manner that has resulted in positive perceptions and satisfaction levels among inmates and we encourage the Department to look at these programs closely. It is our judgment that remedial actions to improve the situation in those facilities are within the resource constraints facing the Department. Further, we recommend that the Department listen closely to what inmates have to say with regard to the adequacy of PreStart programming and what can be done to enhance such programming. Messages are sometimes conflicting, but the consumers of the service know better than we what is most consistent with the successful achievement of their need areas.

## CHAPTER FIVE: AN OVERVIEW OF PHASE II PROGRAMMING

Radically different from most parole supervision structures, the original design of the community supervision component of PreStart separated the surveillance and supervision functions of parole from integrative social service provision functions. After release from prison, the vast majority of releasees are allowed to voluntarily utilize community resources brokered through a system of newly developed Community Service Centers. The Service Centers are designed to be information and resource brokerage facilities, intended to promote the abilities of releasees to develop and implement effective employment, residential living, and treatment plans.

For releasees who present specific needs, the Department of Corrections planned the implementation of specialized service delivery mechanisms: (a) four Community Drug Intervention Programs, which are to provide services and drug testing for releasees posing manifest substance abuse needs; (b) contracted services for specialized interventions with selected sex offenders; and (c) PreStart's Special Intensive Supervision Unit to which certain releasees thought to pose enhanced risks to public safety, and those releasees from the Dixon Springs Shock Incarceration program, are to be assigned. The Intensive Supervision Unit (SISU) is the only component of the PreStart program that retained the traditional surveillance function of parole supervision. The total package of services and programs available for releasees in the community is termed Phase II programming.

The following figures represent the number of releasees under various Phase II programming as of February 16, 1993:

<b>Zone 1</b>	<b>15,157</b>
<b>Zone 2</b>	<b>3,480</b>
<b>Zone 3</b>	<b>2,240</b>
<b>Zone 4</b>	<b>1,724</b>
<b>SISU</b>	<b>582</b>
<b>Cook County Jail</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Total ED</b>	<b>1,033</b>
<b>Boot Camp Releasees</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Other Custody</b>	<b>331</b>
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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,433</b>

As is obvious from the above figures, the Community Services Division of IDOC has a tremendous challenge in providing designed PreStart programming to its multitude of clients. A total of 39 parole agents in the Special Intensive Supervision Unit are assigned the responsibility of supervising the 582 high risk mandatory supervised releasees assigned to SISU, the 185 boot camp releasees, and the 1,033 releasees on Electronic Detention. The average caseload calculated from these figures (1,800/39) is 46:1, a figure fairly close to the American Correctional Association's recommended caseload size for *regular* parole. Theoretically at least, the burden is even heavier for the 40 or so Community Service Center agents who have the task of providing "assistance" to 22,601 releasees.

In the following pages only limited descriptive information on Phase II programming efforts will be provided. Evaluative efforts have not yet included a systemic analysis of Phase II programming throughout the State.

### **Community Service Centers**

The Phase II component of PreStart ideally utilizes Community Service Centers (CSCs) to assist releasees in achieving personal goals developed in their Individual Development Plans (IDP). Under the original PreStart design, the intent was to make almost all releasee contact with Community Service Centers voluntary. The original Administrative Directive specifying releasee contact requirements with Service Centers (04.15.105A-C, dated 7/1/91) states that: "Inmates shall be required to contact a Community Services Zone Headquarters upon release" (p. 1). No further specific requirements for reporting are present other than the statement that during the initial reporting session, IDOC staff shall "advise the releasee of further reporting requirements" (p. 2). As indicated in Chapter Two, the original intent was *not* to have releasees report to CSCs on a mandated basis. A PreStart agent described what happened early during Phase II implementation:

When Prestart was initially implemented, there was no information available to the agents or the releasees concerning what was expected of either. What was perhaps worse was that once information came out it was soon followed by conflicting information. When first implemented those released to PreStart were told they did not have to make contact with any parole agents. The idea was that all services would be voluntary, and that there would be no supervision component. It wasn't until 3 or 4 weeks into the program, at the end of July 1991, that a directive came from the Deputy Director saying that releasees did indeed have to check in upon release. There was no sure way to contact those that had been released with no orders for contact.



Though some have been contacted, some (20% or so) have not been found. This was a statewide problem.

Why the apparent sudden turnaround in requiring releasees to report? A number of interviews suggest the source of the new policy was a statement made by the Governor to a news reporter. In response to the reporter's statement that parolees were no longer to be supervised given budget cuts, parole layoffs, and the new PreStart program, the governor said that this understanding was mistaken. He said that parolees still had to report every month for the first six months of their release. Shortly thereafter the IDOC's Director affirmed that the Governor's comments were correct, although they were inconsistent with the design of PreStart.

In response, the Deputy Director sent out a memorandum that would become the working policy of the department and which would have major impact on the operations of the service centers. That policy, which eventually was introduced into an Administrative Directive dated June 1, 1992, is consistent with the statement made by the Governor. Thus, releasee tracking and accountability -- even in a relatively token dosage -- was reintroduced into the "assistance component" of the PreStart program. The confusion over reporting requirements continued to linger, however, and was readily apparent during our observations of PreStart classes and interviews with inmates during the summer of 1992. Very different expectations were being communicated within and across facilities.

Under current Administrative Directives, newly released inmates are required to make an initial contact with their Service Center agent to go over their IDP and to resolve general issues. As discussed earlier, staff questionnaire and interview data suggest that while the releasees make the initial contact, it does not systematically entail discussion of the IDP and release plans.

After initial contact has been made, releasees are required to make at least one monthly contact with their Service Center agent (either in person or by phone) for six months, or longer, if determined necessary. This is done so that the releasee can inform the Service Center agent of progress regarding the IDP, and request services which aid in the achievement of goals listed in the IDP.

The stated primary function of Service Center agents is to broker services by informing releasees of the services available to them in their local community. Some of these

services are the result of formal interfaces with community-based social service agencies (e.g., Job Training Partnership Act; Illinois Job Service; and Illinois Department of Public Aid). The assistance of numerous other formal and informal social service agencies are also supposed to be brokered to meet the critical needs of releasees (e.g., food, clothing and financial assistance programs; educational programs; counseling programs, etc.).

Perhaps the most fundamental concern with respect to Phase II programming is the attempt to staff 19 Community Service Centers full time with 40 or so agents. As one person commented:

We have two agents at an office. The problem is if people are on vacation, or sick, it leaves only 1 agent. All that person can do is answer the phone and the mail. They can't get out to the service vendors, they can't check on clients, see if their needs are being met. Budget constraints are unbelievable.

Until more staff are hired, the belief that most of the Community Service Centers can provide a meaningful service delivery mechanism may be quixotic. This is especially true in light of the record keeping function that has been added to the duties of the Service Center agents.

In subsequent reports a full implementation analysis of Community Service Center activities will be presented.

### **Special Programs for Special Populations**

#### **Sex Offender Programming**

The planned delivery of specialized interventions with selected sex offenders through contracts with private service agencies has only recently been implemented in one jurisdiction. IDOC has contracted with Mental Health Services of Southern Madison County to provide sex offender outpatient treatment for up to 20 releasees serviced by the East St. Louis Community Service Center. The \$108,000 contract calls for services to be provided from Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 1993. Because site visits have not yet been made to this program, an implementation analysis is not currently possible. However, the long delay in establishing sex offender treatment programs by IDOC under PreStart, suggests that more Central Office attention (this is not a function of the Community Services Division) should have been paid

to the development of necessary contracts. The detailed and comprehensive plan developed by IDOC for the Community Sex Offender Treatment Program (draft, dated 8/25/92) provides a very good guide for subsequent program development and its implementation should be given priority status within the Community Services Division. A similar issue arises with regard to the development of Community Drug Intervention Units.

### **Community Drug Units**

In the original formulation of the PreStart program, the implementation of four Community Drug Intervention Programs was planned. They were to provide services and drug testing for releasees posing manifest substance abuse needs. The program design "combines high levels of supervision and frequent drug testing with special case management services directly related to drug treatment" (IDOC, Nov. 20, 1991: 2). The process of implementing these Drug Units has been slow and uneven. As of February 1992, only one drug unit was fully operational in a manner consistent with previously designated programming and staffing patterns. That drug unit had been in existence prior to the implementation of PreStart as a federally funded pilot project.

The delay in getting the planned Community Drug Units on line at least partially reflects the lack of a top or mid-level management Department of Corrections employee, relatively free of other duties, being designated as responsible for implementation. It takes considerable time to pursue and develop contracts with community based-drug treatment vendors and to hire and train personnel to staff the Community Drug Units. Initially, the Community Services Division did not have control over funding for the Community Drug Units (now it does), and appropriated dollars actually lapsed because contracts were not in place. The lack of management level attention to the development and execution of such programming, and split responsibilities across organizational subunits, has resulted in a lack of overall progress in establishing fully operational Community Drug Units.

For instance, the Lawndale Community Drug Unit has had PreStart agents working for about one year, but only recently hired a substance abuse counselor and contracted with a drug treatment vendor to provide outpatient and inpatient drug treatment services. Likewise, while the Aurora and East St. Louis Community Drug Units still do not have substance abuse counselors, PreStart agents have been working in these units for about a year. The result is

that while PreStart staff have been in place, drug treatment has not been delivered. Consequently, these units are still in their early formative stages. Due to this situation, subsequent evaluation efforts relating to these Community Drug Units will be limited to implementation analyses.

The Springfield Community Drug Intervention Unit (CDIP) was established in December of 1989 as a pilot project funded with federal dollars. "The primary purpose of the ...(program) is to reduce recidivism. The program is designed to address substance abuse issues, impose conditions for treatment, provide for follow-up, encourage training for job placement, and provide an alternative to incarceration" (Illinois Department of Corrections, April 1990).

The program is staffed by two parole agents, a certified substance abuse counselor under contract from a local drug treatment provider, and a program supervisor who is a CPA III that is also certified as a substance abuse counselor. The maximum caseload is 50, allowing staff a high level of monitoring and intervention with parolees.

During its pilot status, the program was the subject of a rigorous evaluation utilizing an experimental design. IDOC has reported that the evaluation demonstrated that the increased supervision and periodic drug testing associated with the program has proved "effective" (Human Services Plan, 1990-1992: 151). New felony arrests for a group of 71 program participants were slightly lower than for a control group of 65 non-participants. The technical violation rate for the experimental group was, however, slightly higher than for the control group (54.9% vs. 49.2%). Positive urinalyses for program participants decreased over time during the pilot phase, suggesting the increasing effectiveness of the program in promoting client sobriety (Illinois Department of Corrections, October 9, 1991). Since July of 1991, when it went off pilot project status and became a program under the PreStart umbrella, the Springfield CDIP has not been the subject of formal evaluation. It is therefore impossible to ascertain whether the program is currently effective in achieving its goals. This topic will be addressed in the final report of the current evaluative effort.

### **Special Intensive Supervision Unit (SISU)**

Under the original PreStart design, SISU was to include offenders predicted to be high risks to public safety. This was a major component of the entire design as voluntary



utilization of Community Service Centers does not threaten public safety measurably if high risk offenders are reliably identified and put under close community supervision.

Through most of the 1980s, IDOC utilized a parole case classification system in which parolees were assigned to varying levels of supervision based on assessments of offender risk and need. The system was abandoned in 1987 because it was thought that the necessary human resources were not available within the Department to assess every parolee. Further, there was not much need for such a system if the primary operational goal of parole supervision was to simply know where all parolees were. Unfortunately, the case classification system has not been reintroduced in even a limited fashion. Thus, the Department's attempts to currently identify high risk offenders for placement in SISU does not benefit from an objective assessment of risk.

IDOC currently uses a subjective classification process to classify and assign inmates to the Special Intensive Supervision program. Assignment to Intensive Supervision is guided, but not determined, by the holding conviction charge. An initial subjective inmate screening on risk is performed by the supervising community agent. The case is then reviewed by the regional supervisor, who makes the final assignment decision (except in the northern region where another level of review by the Special Intensive Supervision Coordinator takes place). It has been indicated by IDOC that there is no maximum number of Intensive Supervision slots. Theoretically, then, there is no excess population in need of supervision. That is, all of the highest risk clients thought to be in need of Intensive Supervision are said to be placed in SISU.

The vast bulk of individuals placed in the SISU, however, are not predicted to be high risk because of clear behavioral indicators. Rather, legally defined categories of individuals are subject to automatic placement in SISU, leaving little caseload space for those even subjectively deemed to be high risk independent of their legal status. As reported in IDOC's Human Services Plan for 1991-1993, criteria for placement on Intensive Supervision may include (p. 69-70):

- \*Release from a specialized treatment center
- \*Release from the Impact Incarceration Program (Boot Camp)
- \*Adjudicated Guilty But Mentally Ill
- \*Adjudicated a Sexually Dangerous Person
- \*Adjudicated an Habitual Child Sex Offender
- \*Not Completed Phase I



- \*Has an indeterminate sentence
- \*Has mandatory conditions of release
- \*Has substance abuse history
- \*Is a sex offender

The vast majority of persons placed in SISU are individuals from the first five categories listed above, who are automatically placed in SISU, along with the increasingly large number of individuals placed on Electronic Detention (ED). In July 1989, IDOC initiated an electronic detention program to place eligible and carefully screened inmates under electronic supervision in the community during the last one to six months of their incarceration. Since that time, more than 3,000 inmates have been placed on Electronic Detention, with two-thirds of them completing the program successfully. The program is widely viewed as being successful (see e.g., The Illinois Task Force on Crime and Corrections, June 1992) and is a very clear priority within the Corrections Department. As detailed at the beginning of this chapter, over 1,000 of the 1,800 releasees in the SISU program are on ED. This leaves a relatively small percentage of "parolees" who are placed on SIS because of predicted risk.

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented a descriptive overview of Prestart Phase II programming and has provided some basic observations gleaned from program documentation and staff questionnaire data. The lack of timely implementation with regard to community based sex offender and drug offender treatment programming is considered problematic. Under the original PreStart design, the Special Intensive Supervision Unit (SISU) was to include releasees predicted to be of high risk to public safety. Currently, IDOC does not use an objective classification system to identify high risk releasees. Coupled with the fact that the vast majority of individuals are assigned because of legal criteria and not behavioral indicators of risk, relatively few releasees who may be of high risk find themselves on special intensive supervision.

A more complete assessment of Phase II programming will be presented in forthcoming reports.

## **CHAPTER SIX: ALLIED AGENCIES**

### **Background and Rationale**

The success of Phase II is inextricably tied to Parole Officer and Community Service Center (CSC) variables, such as knowledge of community services and willingness and ability to perform referral services, and the extent to which releasees who need services seek and receive assistance from CSCs. Ultimately, the success of Phase II efforts will also be contingent upon a number of community variables: the range, quality and number of services that exist to meet the needs of ex-offenders, the ability to integrate service delivery at the local level, and the acceptance of CSC clients. Even under the best conditions -- fully staffed CSCs, motivated and trained Parole Officers, releasees who are willing to seek assistance -- reintegration efforts will fail if necessary services are unavailable to released offenders and community-based constituents of the program are not supportive. Thus, this portion of the PreStart evaluation includes surveys of agencies, both criminal justice and service agencies, to assess knowledge of and response to PreStart.

This chapter examines the results of a survey of allied agencies conducted in November 1992. A second assessment will be conducted in the summer of 1993.

### **Survey Methods and Procedures**

The initial sampling method and strategy for surveying allied agencies included the selection of: 1) all counties that had Community Service Centers; 2) counties which were adjacent to the CSC counties and/or had significant numbers of releasees requiring services; and 3) comparison counties that were more than 60 miles from the CSCs intended to service them, or which were non-adjacent and had small numbers of releasees.

The respondents were designated agency heads from social service providers and criminal justice agencies. The initial social services sample was to include the Department of Children and Family Services, Community Mental Health Centers, Department of Rehabilitation Services, County Health Departments, Departments of Public Aid, other State and local agencies, as identified, and major providers of drug and mental health services.

The criminal justice sample was separated into two categories, law enforcement agency representatives and court service representatives. Law enforcement agency

representatives were to include major police departments in the counties and county sheriff departments. Court service representatives were to include State's Attorneys, Public Defenders, county probation offices, and circuit courts (judges with criminal division responsibilities).

Primarily because of the large number of agencies that met the specifications of the sampling plan, and the consequent projected cost of the survey, the initial sampling plan was modified in two ways. First, the total number of counties was reduced. Fifty-three counties met the initial specifications, with the majority being counties adjacent to the CSC counties. From this group, the number of counties in the sample was reduced to 41. The number of counties in the adjacent category was reduced by including only the counties adjacent to the CSC's with the largest populations. The final total sample included 15 counties where the Community Service Centers are located, 16 counties adjacent to the CSCs, and 10 comparison counties that are more than 60 miles from the CSCs intended to service them. (see Table 6.1).

Because of the excessive number of potential respondents if all relevant allied agencies were surveyed, and due to information the evaluation team gathered at institutional site visits, the social services agency list was revised to include only regional Department of Children and Family Services and JTPA offices, local Illinois Department of Public Aid offices, local Illinois Department of Employment Security offices, and local Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse service providers. Based on information obtained from institutional respondents, specific agencies were added to the list, including the Safer Foundation, Progressions, The Salvation Army, and so forth.

The initial law enforcement agency sample (major police departments and county sheriffs' offices) was not modified. However, the court services sample was pared to include only State's Attorneys, Public Defenders, all of the chief judges in the State of Illinois and 24 circuit court judges with criminal division responsibilities from Cook County.

On November 20, 1992, questionnaires were mailed to 177 social service agencies, 169 law enforcement and court service agencies, and 46 judges, for a total sample size of 392 allied agencies.

**TABLE 6.1**  
**SAMPLE COUNTIES FOR ALLIED AGENCY SURVEY**  
**(N=41)**

<b>COUNTIES</b>		
<b>CSC</b>	<b>ADJACENT</b>	<b>COMPARISON</b>
<b>Cook</b>	<b>DuPage</b>	<b>Jo Davies</b>
<b>Lake</b>	<b>McHenry</b>	<b>Lee</b>
<b>Kane</b>	<b>DeKalb</b>	<b>Alexander</b>
<b>Will</b>	<b>Grundy</b>	<b>Jersey</b>
<b>Kankakee</b>	<b>Kendall</b>	<b>Marshall</b>
<b>Winnebago</b>	<b>Stephenson</b>	<b>Warren</b>
<b>Rock Island</b>	<b>Henry</b>	<b>Clark</b>
<b>Peoria</b>	<b>Iroquois</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Champaign</b>	<b>Vermillion</b>	<b>Lawrence</b>
<b>Sangamon</b>	<b>McLean</b>	<b>Bond</b>
<b>St. Clair</b>	<b>Tazewell</b>	-----
<b>Effingham</b>	<b>McDonough</b>	-----
<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Morgan</b>	-----
<b>Williamson</b>	<b>Madison</b>	-----
<b>Adams</b>	<b>Marion</b>	-----
-----	<b>Jackson</b>	-----

In general, the response from the survey as of 2/16/93 was poor, with an overall return rate of 33 percent (126/392).<sup>1</sup> Criminal justice agencies returned 57 out of 215

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<sup>1</sup> Response patterns were as follows. For criminal justice agencies where Community Service Centers were located, 7 out of 15 counties did not respond to the questionnaire at all, that is, not one agency representative returned the questionnaire. On the average, four questionnaires were sent to each county. Of those located adjacent to the CSC counties and/or had significant numbers of releasees requiring services, 3 out of 16 counties did not respond (19 percent). Among the criminal justice agencies located in comparison counties that were more than 60 miles from the CSC's intended to service them, or which were non-adjacent and had smaller numbers of releasees, 3 out of 10 counties did not respond (30 percent).

Due to population size and available services, some counties in the public service agency sample were sent

questionnaires. Of those, 30 questionnaires were from police departments and sheriffs' offices. From court service representatives, State's Attorneys and Public Defenders, 23 questionnaires were returned. Only 4 judges responded, with one sending a note saying that he had forwarded the questionnaire to the Chief of Adult Probation in his circuit. Of social service agencies, 65 out of 177 questionnaires were returned.

Preliminary analysis of the returns indicated a surprisingly low level of awareness of PreStart. For this reason, and because previous efforts by the evaluation team to enhance returns on the staff questionnaire were of limited value, it was determined that the evaluation team would not do a follow-up mailing to the allied agencies.

Because of the poor return rate, limited data are reported here and the interpretation is fairly conservative.

### **Allied Agency Survey Goals**

The goals of the initial assessment were:

1. To determine the awareness of allied agencies, both criminal justice and service agencies, of PreStart programming within the community;
2. To determine the community's receptiveness to PreStart clients;
3. To assess allied agencies' perceptions and expectations regarding the impact of PreStart on existing services;

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more questionnaires than other counties. For example, service agencies in Cook County received 28 questionnaires, while some rural counties were sent only two or three. For service agencies where Community Service Centers are located, 2 out of 15 counties did not respond (13 percent). For service agencies in adjacent counties, 4 out of 16 did not respond (25 percent). Of agencies located in comparison counties, 4 out of 10 counties did not respond (40 percent).

Generally, response rates from allied agencies were expected to be higher from those counties where CSC's were located primarily because of their proximity to the centers. Adjacent counties were expected to have lower than CSC county returns but higher than comparison counties. Comparison counties were expected to have the lowest return rate because of their distance from the CSC's. Basically, the initial expectations about response by county criteria for public service agencies were confirmed. However, of large urban counties, such as Cook, where five CSCs are located, only 4 out of 28 service agencies responded. Surprisingly, overall *non*-response rates for criminal justice agency respondents located in CSC counties were much higher than adjacent or comparison counties.

A pattern that emerges from the initial county sample criteria is that counties with larger urban populations had an overall lower response rate than did less populous rural counties, at least among criminal justice agencies. For instance, not a single criminal justice official from Cook County returned a questionnaire. No conclusions can be drawn about response by county considering the overall low response rate when comparing criminal justice with service agencies in urban or rural counties. However, this might indicate that the dissemination of information concerning the PreStart program has been targeted more toward service providers and less toward criminal justice agencies, in both urban and rural areas.



4. To determine any regulatory, organizational or resource obstacles to the delivery of existing community services to PreStart clients; and
  5. To identify significant gaps in available services for PreStart clients.
- The survey results which follow are presented in order of these goals.

## **Survey Results**

### **Awareness of PreStart**

A fundamental pre-condition for integrated service delivery at the local level is communication among agencies and a shared awareness of directions and levels of services. In the specific case of corrections in the community, both criminal justice and allied service agencies should be knowledgeable of changes in service delivery that have the potential to affect their operations. Thus, the surveys of allied criminal justice and social service agencies inquired about awareness of PreStart among these agencies.

Most criminal justice respondents were unaware of PreStart prior to receiving the survey questionnaire. Sixty-nine percent of law enforcement respondents and 74 percent of court service representatives stated that the knowledge they had about PreStart was gleaned from the questionnaire itself. Only 31 percent of law enforcement and 25 percent of court services representatives stated that they had previously learned about PreStart through IDOC, social service agency contacts, or prison releasees. This pattern held across regions of Illinois.

Of the three judges who responded, all three stated that their knowledge of PreStart was through the questionnaire. One judge stated, "This is the first time I even heard that such a program exists and I am Chief Judge and handle about 30 felonies per month." Another judge commented more directly, "I think that it is a crime that none of the judges have been made aware of the program."

In response to an open-ended question that asks for additional comments about the PreStart program, its relation to the agencies, or its impact on parolees and communities, several law enforcement personnel expressed their unfamiliarity with PreStart and the applicability of PreStart to their agency with remarks such as: "Prior to receiving this survey, I had no knowledge that the program exists. Being a county of less than 60 inmates we would not be in this program. I would like to learn more of this program and it's impact

on the communities." Another stated, "We need to have more contact and information on how the program applies to our county area. We are willing to assist with the program but no one has contacted us. This survey is a good idea and I hope we hear from S.I.U. and the PreStart organization."

About half of the social service agencies were not aware of PreStart until they received the survey questionnaire. Of social service agencies which responded, 49 percent said they first learned about PreStart from the questionnaire, and another 49 percent reported that they had previously learned about PreStart from other sources. Respondents from Zone 3 (Central Illinois) were much more likely to report having had previous knowledge of PreStart than respondents from other zones (66 percent). Of those who said they had no knowledge, a mental health center respondent said, "We have no knowledge about this program till now so we don't know how it would impact our agency." An Illinois Department of Public Aid respondent commented, "Someone from IDOC should talk to our agency regarding this program." Another agency respondent commented, "This document is the sum and total of what I have learned about PreStart! It sounds like something we should understand since we have two large correctional facilities in our area . . . good candidates for assistance with this program."

The limited knowledge of PreStart among the survey respondents provides the backdrop for understanding additional survey results, such as receptiveness.

## **Receptiveness**

Despite their limited awareness of the program, both criminal justice agencies and social services agencies were relatively receptive to the concept of PreStart. For example one county Health Department Director commented that, "I am interested in learning more, as I am sure many of the parolees are using the agency, but we are unaware and are willing to help where possible."

In addition, there was some agreement among both criminal justice and social service agencies that "PreStart is a good idea." Among the social service agencies which responded to the survey, 57 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that PreStart is a good idea, while 18 percent were unsure and only 7.5 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Strong variation in response patterns emerged across Zones: Eighty-five

percent of the social service agency respondents in Zone 4 (Southern Illinois) agreed that PreStart is a good idea while only 33 percent of the respondents from Zone 2 (Northern Illinois) felt this way.

It is probably not surprising that a somewhat smaller proportion of the responding criminal justice agencies agreed with the shift to a service model, although even among these agencies, 40 percent agreed or strongly agreed that PreStart is a good idea, 14 percent were not sure, 30 percent had no opinion, and only 16 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Regional variation among criminal justice respondents was minimal on this measure.

Because of the low level of awareness of PreStart among survey respondents, it is important to control for "time of awareness" (either when receiving the questionnaire or previously). Greater awareness of PreStart may be related to stronger opinions, one way or another, on the issue of whether PreStart is a good idea. Indeed this is the case, at least among the criminal justice respondents. When "time of awareness" is used as a control variable, those criminal justice respondents with prior knowledge of PreStart were more likely to disagree (25%) or strongly disagree (18.8%) with the statement "PreStart is a good idea" than were those criminal justice respondents who learned about PreStart from the questionnaire (only 3% strongly disagreed and no respondents fell into the disagree category). Another way to express this is to say that criminal justice respondents who were unaware of PreStart until they received the questionnaire, and thus had very little knowledge of the program, were more likely to see the merit in the PreStart program.

Among the social service respondents the relationship between "time of awareness" of PreStart and opinions is different. Among the social service respondents with knowledge of PreStart prior to the questionnaire, 75.9 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that PreStart was a good idea. Among those with no prior knowledge, 37.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that PreStart was a good idea, 25 percent were not sure and 29.2 percent had no opinion. Thus, among social service agencies, compared with criminal justice agencies, there is a greater tendency for those familiar with PreStart to think that it is a good idea.

Another issue in terms of the receptiveness of agencies in the community is the degree to which they view PreStart as being compatible with their own agency in terms of its goals and philosophy. The social service agency respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "PreStart's philosophy about social services is highly

compatible with that of your agency." Among the social service agencies with prior knowledge of PreStart, 44.8 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the PreStart philosophy was compatible with theirs, while only 10.3 percent disagreed and the remaining were not sure (31%) or had no opinion (13.8%). Understandably, the social service agencies which only learned about PreStart through the survey were less certain about the compatibility: 45.8 percent were not sure and 37.5 percent had no opinion on this issue, while only 16.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the philosophy of PreStart was compatible with the philosophy of their own agency.

An important issue for the criminal justice respondents is comparison of this innovation in the delivery of parole services with prior parole services. Even if criminal justice system respondents think that PreStart is a good idea, they may see no difference in terms of helping the offenders. Indeed that is the case for many criminal justice respondents.

The criminal justice agency respondents were asked to compare PreStart with previous parole services in Illinois in terms of helping inmates reintegrate successfully into their communities. The item on the questionnaire that elicited their opinion on this issue asked them to compare PreStart to previous services on a scale from minus five (much less helpful) to plus five (much more helpful). The largest proportion of criminal justice respondents (41.5%) saw no difference from the perspective of helping inmates reintegrate into the community and among the remaining respondents opinion was quite mixed, as indicated by the data below.

**TABLE 6.2**  
**COMPARISON OF PRESTART WITH PREVIOUS PAROLE SERVICES**  
**(N=57)**

HOW DOES IT COMPARE?		(%)
Much Less Helpful	-5	4.9
	-4	9.8
	-3	7.3
	-2	2.4
	-1	0.0
No Difference	0	41.5
	1	7.3
	2	7.3
	3	14.6
	4	4.9
Much More Helpful	5	0.0
TOTAL		100.0%

Most respondents in the survey did think that PreStart is a good idea. Typical of criminal justice respondents is the opinion expressed by one State's Attorney: "The program is conceptually sound. The ideas are good and needed to be implemented. However, . . . . " The "however" refers to expectations about problems in implementation, discussed next.

## **Perceptions and Expectations**

Because of their variant service versus law enforcement orientations, perceptions and expectations about PreStart differ between criminal justice and non-criminal justice respondents.

### *Criminal Justice Agencies*

Many of the criminal justice respondents decried the absence of a supervision component for the majority of releasees. This is evident in responses to a survey question which asked: "In your opinion, does the design of PreStart ensure the adequate accountability of prison releasees? In other words, is the supervision structure adequate to ensure that prison releasees are following the conditions of release?" Forty-nine percent of the respondents said "No" and cited the reduction in PreStart agents as being a serious problem in the supervision and assistance of parolees. This view was more commonly expressed by criminal justice respondents from Central Illinois (59%) than from respondents either in Northern or Southern Illinois (44%).

For example, one Public Defender commented, "I ask many of our felony clients who their parole officer is when it applies (new felony charge). Without exception they indicate that all they do is call a phone number once a month. They also indicate that they have little, if any, face-to-face contact with a PreStart agent. For many of our clients, they are being released back into the same environment and the State is not adequately monitoring these people." Others were more direct, "Too much unsupervised time for parolees" and "By and large, the present parole supervision is simply inadequate to deal with the very serious offenders being released."



The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "PreStart does not sufficiently address public safety concerns." Among the criminal justice respondents 38 percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, 18 percent were not sure, 34 percent had no opinion and only 10 percent disagreed. Thus, most of the criminal justice respondents either thought that PreStart did not sufficiently address public safety concerns, or were unsure or of no opinion.

Among the criminal justice respondents a similar pattern of response was obtained when they were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "PreStart will reduce the number of new crimes committed by releasees." Only 8 percent of the respondents agreed with this statement, while 42 percent strongly disagreed or disagreed, 18 percent were unsure and 32 percent had no opinion.

Given these patterns of response, it is fairly easy to understand the expectations of respondents about the ability of PreStart to reduce the number of releasees who return to prison. Criminal justice respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "PreStart will reduce the number of releasees who return to prisons." Only 16 percent of the respondents agreed that PreStart would reduce the number of releasees who returned to prison. By contrast, 28 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this idea, 22 percent were not sure and 34 percent had no opinion.

Once again, more than half of these respondents were expressing opinions on something they only learned about through the survey conducted by the evaluation team. When opinions on these items are examined controlling for "time of awareness of PreStart" (either when receiving the questionnaire or previously), a general pattern emerges in which those with previous knowledge of PreStart are somewhat more negative in their opinions, and those with no prior knowledge admit being unsure or having no opinion. For example, among the criminal justice respondents with prior knowledge of PreStart, 50 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "PreStart will reduce the number of releasees who return to prisons." By contrast, among the criminal justice respondents who only became aware of PreStart upon their receiving the survey questionnaire, 66.6 percent were either not sure or had no opinion.

Generally, among the criminal justice respondents, expectations are low regarding the ability of PreStart to reduce the number of new crimes, reduce the number of offenders

returned to prison, and sufficiently address public safety concerns. Expectations are lower among the respondents with prior knowledge of PreStart.

This ambivalence to negative expectations should be tempered, however, with some other opinions of the criminal justice respondents. These respondents were asked to agree or disagree with this statement: "Parole Officers should not be social workers." Among the criminal justice respondents, opinion was evenly split on this matter. Thirty-six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 36 percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 4 percent were not sure and 24 percent had no opinion. Thus, there is some degree of support for the idea that parole officers perform social work functions.

Criminal justice perceptions and expectations regarding PreStart are at best mixed. Most respondents, both in comments to open-ended questions and in responses to closed-ended questions, believed that PreStart, although a good idea, does not adequately provide for public safety.

### *Social Service Agencies*

Some of the same concerns about the ability of PreStart to provide adequate supervision were cited by the service providers. For example, a health provider who had previous knowledge of the program wrote, "Excluding Special Intensive Supervision, there is no supervision of releasees. Parole officers in Service Centers have no leverage on releasees. They (releasees) just do what they want. They know there is nothing a parole officer can do."

Even so, the service providers were less negative and more unsure than the criminal justice agencies about the ability of PreStart to adequately address public safety concerns and its ability to reduce the number of offenders returned to prison. The service providers were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "PreStart does not sufficiently address public safety concerns." Among the responding agencies, 17 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and only 7.6 percent agreed or strongly agreed. The vast majority of respondents were either not sure (47.2%) or had no opinion (28.3%).

The social service agencies were also asked to agree or disagree with this statement: "PreStart will reduce the number of releasees who return to prison." A similar pattern of responses is found. Only 13 percent of social service providers strongly disagreed or

disagreed with the statement, and another 13 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Most respondents were not sure (48.1%) or had no opinion (25.6%).

It appears, then, that compared with criminal justice agency representatives, most service providers were incapable of or unwilling to comment on the public protection functions of PreStart. It could well be the case that the issue of relative effectiveness of different correctional interventions is simply not something service providers tend to think about, and hence they feel uncomfortable or incapable when asked to comment on it.

A more pressing issue for social service respondents is the potential impact of PreStart on their agency. The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "PreStart will increase the demand for services from my agency." The majority of respondents, (48.1%) said they were not sure and an additional 14.8 percent had no opinion. Only 26 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 11.1 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents from Central Illinois were more likely to agree with this statement than respondents from other regions of the State (40%). Thus, it appears that the agency respondents are unclear about the potential impact of PreStart on their agency.

When asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "PreStart should make more referrals to your agency," the responses of the service agencies were somewhat different. Forty-two percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that PreStart should make more referrals to their agency, while only 11.3 percent disagreed and about half were either not sure (24.5%) or had no opinion (22.6%). Respondents from Cook County were the ones most likely to agree with this statement (67%).

Comments on the questionnaire illuminate further these data. For example, the voluntary nature of offender participation was viewed as problematic. An administrator in a local Department of Employment Security (DES) noted that:

Although the advantages of contacting my agency are covered during Phase I of PreStart, many releasees do not take advantage. Before PreStart, parole agents had much more face-to-face contact with their clients and could ascertain their needs. Now it is up to the releasee to admit he/she is having a problem. It is more difficult to request assistance from a parole officer, as no rapport has been built. Rapport often results from successive contacts. Releasees do not feel they need to see their agents. I feel Phase I is a very good attempt to inform inmates of 'what is on the other side of the wall.' However, Phase II seems to leave them high and dry. More follow-up and

aggressive contacts on the part of parole officers are needed.

Another DES administrator expressed the view that if there were more parole supervisors in the community and if they took a more proactive role in contacting offenders, it would be easier to ensure job services were delivered to offenders. He noted, "PreStart meetings are needed in the Service Centers with placement assistance from job service at this point of DOC supervision." Other agency administrators were concerned that barriers to information sharing between agencies would limit the effectiveness of PreStart (see Obstacles, below).

## **Obstacles**

Social services agencies were asked if there were any laws, rules, regulations or agency policies that would prevent their agencies from delivering services to releasees. The vast majority of the agencies (88%) responded that there were no such obstacles. Of the 12 percent that reported obstacles in law or agency policy, a variety of responses were elicited.

Most often it was noted that the official agency eligibility criteria must be met. For example, a Department of Public Aid administrator indicated that "only federal regulations regarding eligibility" must be met.

Beyond eligibility criteria, the only law or policy that appeared to respondents to be an obstacle to service delivery is Chapter 48 of the Illinois Statutes, a law which prohibits the release of information on DES clients. As pointed out by a DES administrator:

If time were available it would be most helpful for local office staff to contact area employers and build a resource of prospective employers. Unfortunately, cooperation and follow-up between IDOC and IDES is prohibited by law.

Social services agencies were also asked if there were any factors other than laws, rules or regulations that would prevent or hinder their agencies from delivering services. Eighty-eight percent of the agencies indicated that there were no such barriers. Of those reporting obstacles to service delivery, the most frequently mentioned factors involved the availability of resources. A Department of Public Aid Administrator cited as obstacles "funding levels, assessment results, available funds at the time of applications." A JTPA administrator pointed to "funding, staff time, and releasee's attitudes and actions, that is, not



always following employment plans or showing up for appointments." Mental Health administrators reported waiting lists and slightly different problems. One Community Mental Health Director noted that ". . . priority clients are medicaid/DPA eligible -- and . . . we have a very long waiting list in the agency for services other than crisis intervention." Another Community Mental Health administrator echoed this view, "Unless they are in need of medication they may be on a waiting list."

The data suggest that most service providers do not see any obstacles, in theory, to their delivery of services to releasees, as long as State and federal eligibility criteria are met and as long as the resources (funding, staffing, and so forth) are available. This leads to the question of whether, from the point of view of the service respondents, services for releasees are adequate.

### **Gaps in Services**

Both criminal justice and social service respondents were asked if the existing array of community services is sufficient to meet the needs of releasees. Among social service agencies, opinion on this issue was divided: 26.6 percent of the respondents reported that services were sufficient, 34.4 said they were not sufficient, and 39.1 percent said they did not know. Among the criminal justice agency respondents, however, a smaller percent of respondents said services were sufficient (15.8%), a higher percent said they were not sufficient (50.9%), and a somewhat smaller proportion said they did not know (33.3%). Thus, criminal justice respondents are somewhat less confident than service providers in the ability of the communities to provide needed services to releasees.

Both criminal justice and social service agencies were asked to comment on the availability of services to meet the needs of offenders released to the community. Comments varied widely.

Among the criminal justice respondents, the most frequent comments were about lack of services generally, lack of specific services, especially drug services, or lack of parole services. One public defender commented:

My feelings are that these agencies are trying but are not funded to provide specific services to parolees. The job training available is mainly for make-work, minimum wage jobs. The stigma of a prison record in the community prevents the parolees from any real chance of success.



Others commented on specific services. Another Public Defender noted, "Alcohol and drug treatment for the indigent is very scarce." Still another Public Defender contended that, "Drug treatment beds must be made available." Several other criminal justice agency respondents pointed to an insufficient number of PreStart agents to make sure releasees received the services. A Chief Probation Officer commented, "Not enough supervision of parolees to see that they are using the available resources."

A broader range of specific services perceived as unavailable was given by the service agencies. A JTPA administrator identified housing and job services as insufficient. Another JTPA Director pointed to "Lack of employment and training services, transportation, counseling, housing." The most frequently cited unavailable services were employment and job training. A Community Mental Health Program Coordinator observed, "Releasees need a solid economic base to start rebuilding their lives. They need a job which can support them and/or training to get that job. Counseling is not a substitute for this!" A DES representative pointed to a related economic problem of releasees, "Many of them are going back to the county they came from with only \$30.00 gate money and no place to stay."

Another issue related to services is rural location. A County Health Department official indicated that "Being a rural community with limited resources makes it difficult to provide a continuum of services the individual parolee may need."

As noted above, even under the best PreStart programmatic conditions, releasees will experience difficulties in reintegration when services are not available. Opinion is obviously divided on the issue of whether needed services for releasees are available in the community and it is unfortunate that the return rates on the survey were so low that a more accurate assessment of service availability is not possible.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has presented the results from surveys conducted in November 1992 of criminal justice and social service agencies. The allied agencies surveys provide information to assess the community context of Phase II in PreStart.

Unfortunately, the response rate to the mailed survey was poor; only about one-third of the surveys were returned. This factor, coupled with the finding that most of those who did respond were unaware of PreStart until they received the survey instrument, makes it

essential that the data from the survey are interpreted cautiously. In addition, the low number of respondents made it impossible to control for a number of theoretically important factors related to the nature of the respondent, the region, experience with parolees, and so forth.

Against this backdrop of non-response and lack of knowledge, some tentative findings emerge. Even though many of the survey respondents had limited information about PreStart (that gleaned from the questionnaire itself), most seemed generally supportive of the notion that PreStart is a good idea. Primarily for the criminal justice respondents, approval of the concept was matched by a concern that PreStart does not adequately provide for public protection. Criminal justice agency representatives had mixed to low expectations of PreStart in terms of its ability to reduce new crimes, or lower the return rate of releasees to prison. Slightly more than two out of five respondents saw no difference between PreStart and previous parole services in terms of helping ex-offenders reintegrate into their communities.

Probably because of their lack of knowledge of alternative correctional interventions, social service agencies were more ambivalent about their expectations of PreStart. However, of the social service agencies who did respond to the survey, the overwhelming majority saw no significant regulatory, legal, or policy barriers, or any other obstacles, to service delivery for PreStart clients.

On the other hand, both criminal justice and social service agencies did identify gaps in services, primarily related to housing, employment and job training. Other needed services identified by respondents were in the areas of drug treatment and mental health.

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Response patterns were as follows. For criminal justice agencies where Community Service Centers were located, 7 out of 15 counties did not respond to the questionnaire at all, that is, not one agency representative returned the questionnaire. On the average, four questionnaires were sent to each county. Of those located adjacent to the CSC counties and/or had significant numbers of releasees requiring services, 3 out of 16 counties did not respond (19 percent). Among the criminal justice agencies located in comparison counties that were more than 60 miles from the CSC's intended to service them, or which were non-adjacent and had smaller numbers of releasees, 3 out of 10 counties did not respond (30 percent).

Due to population size and available services, some counties in the public service agency sample were sent more questionnaires than other counties. For example, service agencies in Cook County received 28 questionnaires, while some rural counties were sent only two or three. For service agencies where Community Service Centers are located, 2 out of 15 counties did not respond (13 percent). For service agencies in adjacent counties, 4 out of 16 did not respond (25 percent). Of agencies located in comparison counties, 4 out of 10

counties did not respond (40 percent).

Generally, response rates from allied agencies were expected to be higher from those counties where CSC's were located primarily because of their proximity to the centers. Adjacent counties were expected to have lower than CSC county returns but higher than comparison counties. Comparison counties were expected to have the lowest return rate because of their distance from the CSC's. Basically, the initial expectations about response by county criteria for public service agencies were confirmed. However, of large urban counties, such as Cook, where five CSCs are located, only 4 out of 28 service agencies responded. Surprisingly, overall *non*-response rates for criminal justice agency respondents located in CSC counties were much higher than adjacent or comparison counties.

A pattern that emerges from the initial county sample criteria is that counties with larger urban populations had an overall lower response rate than did less populous rural counties, at least among criminal justice agencies. For instance, not a single criminal justice official from Cook County returned a questionnaire. No conclusions can be drawn about response by county considering the overall low response rate when comparing criminal justice with service agencies in urban or rural counties. However, this might indicate that the dissemination of information concerning the PreStart program has been targeted more toward service providers and less toward criminal justice agencies, in both urban and rural areas.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report examined the policy context in which IDOC's PreStart program was conceived and the process by which it was formulated and developed. A variety of data sources were utilized to discover that PreStart was developed in a turbulent policy environment, that the reform was the result of long-standing disenchantment with existing parole structures, and that a severe budget crisis was the precipitating factor which determined the timing of PreStart's birth. Pragmatic financial and organizational concerns drove much of the process which resulted in the PreStart program but the program does also reflect changing correctional philosophies within IDOC.

The timing of the restructuring of parole in terms of planning, staff morale, and available resources was unfortunate. The dash for funding necessitated an abrupt and abbreviated planning process. Staff morale sunk to an all time low. Even with the external funding available to subsidize Phase II programming, remaining IDOC budgetary constraints would limit the amount of staff and equipment accessible to implement PreStart smoothly and to facilitate the inherent link desired between Phase I and Phase II. Programs that were not yet clearly defined--i.e., lacking solid program parameters--had to be implemented on a time line corresponding with the start of a new fiscal year. Thus, the bulk of the program formulation process lasted only a few months.

The hasty process of program development made it difficult to identify and accommodate implementation contingencies that were likely to develop. Understandably, this meant that the program was formulated without having widespread legitimacy among groups that could shape its eventual implementation. Coupled with an unstable policy environment, many barriers to the program's successful implementation were bred in the formulation process.

The present study also provided an overview of the organizational environment in which the program was implemented, highlighting the less than ideal context in which it was translated into action. A number of factors influential in shaping program outcomes, and often responsible for the level of implementation success, were discussed. Assessments were based on site visit observations, interviews with PreStart staff and inmates, and an analysis of questionnaires from PreStart Phase I and Phase II staff.



The study then looked at the implementation of Phase I programming and examined how a variety of system-wide and facility-based factors promoted an uneven level of implementation across facilities. In particular, the introduction of an inadequate program model and curriculum under fairly rigid implementation conditions established by Central Office aggravated existing morale and staffing patterns. Not feeling an "ownership" of the change, many staff are still hostile towards the PreStart program and how it was implemented. This is despite IDOC taking an adaptive implementation approach to PreStart's introduction, and Central Office making a variety of attempts for staff to "recover" the ownership of the program.

The implementation process was plagued by inadequate resources in the form of staff, instructional materials, and physical space to deliver the program. Communication patterns were also quite weak within many facilities and between Central Office and facility staff. Many staff did not understand the goals of PreStart and the **necessity of its implementation**. Orientation and meaningful staff training/development programs were lacking during the early stages of implementation.

Despite the many significant barriers to successful implementation, evaluation staff witnessed the existence of many bona fide Phase I programs. The key factors resulting in these outcomes were the acknowledged priority given PreStart by the Director and his immediate staff, the vigilance of certain Community Services Division staff to "keep things afloat," and strong administrative support for PreStart by high level facility administrators. Visible, active, and forceful support of PreStart was demonstrated in a variety of ways -- e.g., in the form of attending classes and graduation ceremonies, assigning committed and competent staff to key PreStart functions, lubricating relationships across organizational subunits, etc., -- and this support appeared to be the key factor distinguishing successful programs from unsuccessful programs. Notably, the degree of implementation success did not appear overly constrained by facility security level, inmate population composition, or resource levels. Only in one facility were resource levels so low that the integrity of the PreStart program was jeopardized. Committed staff, who are more likely to remain vitalized if supported by team teaching and staff rotation patterns, were found at all site visits, but at some facilities the staff as well as the inmates were disaffected and demoralized. This tended to reflect general organizational cultures more so than anything specific about PreStart.

The process and outcome of IDP development were also examined, given the centrality of the IDP to effective PreStart programming. In general, and across all facilities, IDP's play a limited role in Phase I efforts. They are not taken seriously by most staff and inmates, and are not tailored to reflect the unique needs of particular individuals.

Implementation at Community Correctional Centers was generally much weaker than at correctional institutions. This tended to reflect the greater flexibility allowed CCCs by Central Office in the offering of PreStart than was allowed the institutions, as well as the common view of CCC staff that PreStart is redundant to extant pre-release programming. This was not found to be true, however; the CCCs with the weakest PreStart programs also exerted questionable levels of effort to promote the reintegration of their residents. In particular, problems presented by Electronic Detention clients were noted.

Reactions of the PreStart's primary targets of change, inmates, to Phase I PreStart programming were the subject of a separate analysis and generated some very interesting findings.

In general, it was found that the Illinois Department of Corrections has put together a pre-release program that has been very well received by the vast majority of its consumers. The program is generally perceived by inmates to provide them with practical and meaningful skills, attitudes, and information that will help them make a smoother transition to the community. Inmate reactions to PreStart varied somewhat across facilities, with certain facilities consistently ranking quite low on a variety of indicators of program success.

A descriptive overview of program components associated with Phase II efforts was also presented. A preliminary implementation analysis with focus on particular issues presented by Community Service Center operations, Community Drug Intervention Units, and the Special Intensive Supervision Unit will be presented in a forthcoming report.

Finally, the responses of representatives from a Statewide sampling of criminal justice and social service agencies to the PreStart program were examined. Unfortunately, the response rate to the mailed survey was poor, since only about one-third of the surveys were returned. This factor, coupled with the finding that most of those who did respond were unaware of PreStart until they received the survey instrument, limits the value of this component of the study. Nevertheless, some tentative findings emerged. Even though many of the survey respondents had limited information about PreStart (that gleaned from the

questionnaire itself), most seemed generally supportive of the notion that PreStart is a good idea. Primarily for the criminal justice respondents, approval of the concept was matched by a concern that PreStart does not adequately provide for public protection. Criminal justice agency representatives had mixed to low expectations of PreStart in terms of its ability to reduce new crimes, or lower the return rate of releasees to prison. Slightly more than two out of five respondents saw no difference between PreStart and previous parole services in terms of helping ex-offenders reintegrate into their communities.

Probably because of their lack of knowledge of alternative correctional interventions, social service agencies were more ambivalent about their expectations of PreStart. However, of the social service agencies who did respond to the survey, the overwhelming majority saw no significant regulatory, legal, or policy barriers, or any other obstacles, to service delivery for PreStart clients.

On the other hand, both criminal justice and social service agencies did identify gaps in services, primarily related to housing, employment and job training. Other needed services identified by respondents were in the areas of drug treatment and mental health.

Based on the above and other findings discussed in the interim report, the following recommendations are offered to the Department of Corrections for their consideration to enhance PreStart Programming. They include:

- \* Improve Community Service Center/institutional linkages.
- \* Promote activities that are likely to promote the eventual successful reintegration of offenders throughout their period of incarceration and link these efforts with PreStart programming.
- \* Increase presentations by outside resource providers.
- \* Involve successful ex-offenders as PreStart presenters as much as possible.
- \* Continue to develop relief strategies for classroom presenters.
- \* Establish an ongoing process to identify/evaluate and disseminate successful PreStart techniques.
- \* Continue attempts to have staff feel an "ownership" of the program.
- \* Enhance training programs for PreStart presenters and Phase II staff.
- \* Examine very closely the facilities in which inmates report negative attitudes

towards PreStart and PreStart personnel. After assessing causes of these perceptions, take remedial actions.

- \* Allow inmates to provide systematic and meaningful feedback to facility and system personnel. Class evaluations should be routinized.

- \* IDOC should engage in efforts which promote the systematic and continuous exchange of information about the PreStart program between IDOC, criminal justice agency representatives, and allied social services agencies.

- \* A greater allocation of resources should be devoted to the Central Office to allow for an enhanced level of PreStart program development, administration, monitoring, and evaluation.





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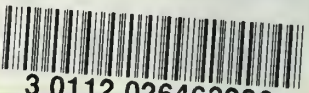
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